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Meditations

for the

Use of the Secular Clergy.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

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BY

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VOLUME SECOND.

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IMPRIMATUR
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THE PRIEST.

SANCTIFIED BY MEANS OF DAILY MEDITATION.

PART SECOND.

MEDITATIONS ON THE SEVERAL MYSTERIES—ON THE DIFFERENT SEASONS AND FESTIVALS OF THE LITURGICAL YEAR.

NOTICE.

So far we have in our meditations followed the plan traced by Saint Ignatius, a plan admirable in itself, which leads man to sanctity, we may say, in a threefold way : First, by cleansing him from his sins ; secondly, by making him acquainted with and a sharer in the sublime virtues, which have their origin in our Lord Jesus Christ ; thirdly, by turning his heart to the love of God. In following that plan, admirable and perfect though it is, we have not been able to dwell on subjects connected with the different seasons of the liturgical year, or with the solemnities and mysteries which are commemorated within the same period. We may have said a little here and there, but not enough to satisfy the cravings of pious souls.

And yet we should meditate on these festivals of the Christian year ; we should comprehend their meaning, not only for the sake of our own sanctification, but also in order to bring about the sanctification of the many souls committed to our care. On these solemn festivities which occur during the year, and which come to us as so many favors from above, the subject naturally presents itself to our meditation. But how can one spend with fervor and devotion the solemnities of Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, or of the Sacred Heart, or,

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again, the festivals of our Blessed Lady, and of the saints, unless he direct, his attention to the spirit of the Church by meditating on what she herself meditates. Moreover, the subjects are so varied that, far from being a tedious occupation, it is one which brings with it a deep sense of increased strength and interior joy.

The liturgical year is divided into three parts. The first, which ends with the feast of the Purification, is called Advent; the second, which comprises Lent and the Paschal season; and the third, which embraces the remainder of the year, namely, from Pentecost to the first Sunday in Advent. These periods we will divide into three sections, and in each section we will consider the proper of the time, and the proper of the saints.

SECTION FIRST.

ADVENT AND CHISTMAS.

I.—PROPER OF THE TIME.

Advent is a time of prayer and penance, instituted by the Church to prepare her children to commemorate in a worthy manner the mystery of the nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lent is a preparation for Easter ; the four thousand years that preceded the birth of Christ were a preparation for His coming into this world, and the four weeks of Advent are a preparation for the solemnity of Christmas.

The Church speaks to us of three Advents of our Lord, and she wishes us to make of these three comings the subjects of our meditations during this holy season. "In the first coming," says St. Bernard, "Jesus came to us in flesh like unto ours and clothed with our infirmities; in the second, He comes in spirit and in grace; in the third, He will come with power and majesty to judge the living and the dead." [1] Pierre de Blois tells us also : "the first coming of the Son of Man was a very humble and obscure one, the second is a mystery of love, the third will be a manifestation of His power; He will come to terrify sinners and make known [2] the final triumph of the just.

1. De Advent, Serm. v.
2. Ibid, Serm. III.

I. MEDITATION.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT—DUTIES OF THE PRIEST IN CONNECTION WITH THE THREEFOLD COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

1st.—CHRIST COMES INTO THE WORLD AT HIS BIRTH TO RENEW THE FACE OF THE EARTH.

2d.—CHRIST COMES INTO OUR SOULS BY HIS GRACE, IN ORDER TO SANCTIFY US AND LIVE WITHIN US.

3d.—CHRIST WILL COME ON THE LAST DAY TO JUDGE THE WORLD.

1st Point. Christ comes into this world to renew the face thereof. This is the event which the Church will soon commemorate. What was the world before the coming of Christ? before the blessed day in which it was said: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us?"* When He came, whom all the true children of Abraham had expected, did He benefit the world? Did He put an end to the misery that existed in the universe? Let us compare our condition—we, especially the priests and friends of Jesus—with the condition of the most renowned and privileged ones of the old dispensation. The Messiah after whom they sighed for the space of four thousand years, praying that the "heavens might rain down the just"—Him we possess; He is really our Emmanuel; Whom all the patriarchs and prophets awaited with much longing, we have in our possession. Have we returned thanks to Divine Providence, to God who predestined us to live in days posterior to the coming of His Son? Do we ever stop to reflect on the immensity of such a blessing? Alas, if people in the world are too often unmindful of it, does not the reason lie with the pastors, who, themselves, give it but very little thought?

Ah, priest of God, the solemnity of Christmas is more for you than a pious reminder of ages gone by. Every morning the mystery of Bethlehem is renewed on the altar of your ministration. . . . As

often as you offer up the holy sacrifice of the mass, you give to the world the same God who was born of the purest of virgins. Your lips, says Tertullian, bring Him forth, *parturiente lingua*. Your hands and your heart are the manger, and the sacramental species are the swaddling clothes. . . . Bow down in adoration of the loving God born in your hands. . . . Welcome Him, and let your heart be filled with transports of joy and a firm hope. By holy communion, He comes to work in your soul the same wonders which He wrought at His coming among men, namely, to drive away darkness, to curb evil inclinations, and to infuse into the souls of His priests holiness and joy. . . . Ah, He comes to you with more favors than you could ever dream of.

2d Point. *Spiritual coming of Christ into souls in order to sanctify and save men.* It would profit us very little to know that Christ came eighteen hundred years ago to visit mankind, "through the bowels of His mercy," if we did not know that He has since that time been coming incessantly, that he might impart to each and every one that spiritual life which He alone can give with abundance. Behold the mystery which should move all hearts. The Redeemer, well aware that no man is accepted by the Father unless he be made conformable to the Son, "in whom He is well pleased," comes to us; He changes us into Himself so that we live no longer, but Christ lives in us, and the Father addresses us as His own Son: "This is My beloved son." Where is fallen man? . . . Since God became man, man is become, as it were, God. . . . Yes, this is done in the Church; this is the noble task she pursues through the ministry of her priesthood; hence we may easily see that the priest is, by nature of his office, the greatest benefactor of his fellow-men.

During the four weeks of Advent, Jesus knocks at the door of the hearts of men in a more pressing manner; if they only consent He will deign to enter; He only craves for a place. By His spiritual birth in their souls, He gives to the just a more abundant life, and the sinner He will snatch from the very jaws of death; for He wills not the death of the sinner, but rather "that he be converted and live." We are His appointed ministers; let us, by all means in our power, further the designs of His mercy. We can prepare the way and make it straight, level the mountains and hills of pride, fill the valleys of discouragement and weakness; all this in a spiritual sense we may have to do, and the

task may be hard, but nothing is impossible with God, who will lend us the strength of His arm. But before preparing others, let us prepare ourselves for that coming of the Son of God. That we may be truly zealous, let us fear and let us hope.

3d Point. *On the last day Christ will come to judge the world.* As the solemnity of Christmas draws near, Holy Church is not without some anxiety. She foresees that many of her children, nay, many perhaps of her priests, will show themselves as indifferent as were the people of Bethlehem on the day of His first coming. It is written, "*His own received Him not . . . . there was no room for them.*" In order to avert such a calamity, she ceases not in her prayers to call on all to do penance. From the pulpit we hear the voice of the great apostle, and of Isaias, and of John, and of Christ Himself. "*Now is the time for us to rise from sleep,*" she asks us all to do penance, bring forth fruits worthy of penance: she strikes terror into the hearts of all by reminding them of the last judgment. To every one she says, Make your choice now; either mercy to-day or judgment hereafter. . . . Either the meek Lamb who taketh away the sins of the world, or the fierce lion who will come later on with the severest vengeance. If you now welcome the Babe who is in the manger in all His loveliness, on the last day, on the day of judgment, there will be no terror in store for you. But woe to those who know not the time of His visitation! Because they pass now unnoticed the Babe that weeps for them, a day will come when they will say in despair: "Mountains, fall upon us, and ye hills, cover us under your ruins!"

But is it enough for you, priests of God, to remind the people of these great truths? Have they no meaning for you as well as for others? The truth is that these sentences apply to none more than to priests. For on the last day the priests will, of necessity, have either the greater glory or the greater confusion. Take, therefore, in the beginning of Advent, the resolution to spend this season according to the spirit of Holy Church—namely, in working out your own salvation as well as the salvation of those committed to your care. Let yours be lives of prayer and recollection; raise your eyes and your hearts to heaven. "*Rorate, cœli, desuper.*" . . . Let the heavens be opened. . . . Come, Lord Jesus, come. In regard to your flock, fail not to instruct them, to prepare them for the reception of the sacraments and show them good example.

1st Point. *Coming of the Lord into the world to sanctify the world.* Soon the Church will commemorate the anniversary of this event. What was the world before and what has it been since the coming of our Lord? Let us compare our condition with that of the best friends of God under the old dispensation ; all the blessings they longed for, we now possess. Let us bow down in adoration of the infant God who transformed us by His grace as He changed the face of the universe.

2d Point. *Spiritual coming of our Lord into the souls of men in order to sanctify and save them.* Our Lord changes us into Himself, so that we live,—not now we, but He liveth in us. During Advent Jesus asks with more earnestness admittance into the hearts of men. He wishes to come to the just to give them more abundantly of His own justice ; to sinners, that they may repent on account of their evil ways, be converted and live.

3d Point. *Last coming of the Lord to judge the world.* During the four weeks of Advent, the Church uses every argument in order to dispose her children for the coming of the Redeemer. . . . She moves the sinner by the thought of the last judgment. . . . . She says, make now your choice, either mercy or judgment. . . . either the meek Lamb who taketh away the sins of the world, or the fierce lion bearing with him vengeance and death. Make up your mind to enter at once into the spirit of the Church, devote your time to your own salvation, and attend also to the salvation of the flock under your care.

II. MEDITATION.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT—THE PREACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST—HOW HE PREPARES HIMSELF FOR HIS HIGH OFFICE.

Every good priest is a precursor of the Lord Jesus Christ. We may very appropriately say of him, "*Thou shalt be called the prophet of the Most High, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways.*"—(Luc. i: 76.) "Our Lord sent His apostles into every city

and place where He was to come Himself."[1] For, says St. Gregory, "*Prædicatores suos Dominus sequitur: quia prædicatio prævenit, et tunc ad mentis nostræ habitaculum Dominus venit, quando verba exhortationis præcurrunt.*"—(Hom. xvii, in Evang.) We see, therefore, it is by preaching that we go before our Lord to prepare His ways. John the Baptist shows us by his example how to qualify ourselves for this important office, and points out the zeal which must accompany us in the discharge of our duty. Let us meditate to-day, then, on the qualities necessary to every preacher, and if we look at St. John, we will notice in that perfect model, three principal features :—

1st.—A SPIRIT OF RECOLLECTION AND PRAYER.

2d.—A COMPLETE AND UNRESERVED DEPENDENCE ON GOD.

3d.—A LIFE OF PENANCE AND MORTIFICATION.

1st Point. *John the Baptist qualified himself for the office of preacher by a spirit of recollection and prayer.* He was very young when he went into the desert; there he dwelt for years, communing with none but God, with whom he held the closest communion. As he is in the desert, so will he be later on, when he will enter upon the duties of his ministry, a man of recollection and of prayer.

The moments spent in recollection by an apostolic man may appear to worldly-minded people as time wasted, but they are the most precious in sight of God. Look at this good priest in his room : for hours and hours he prays in silence ; to look at him, who would think that he has charge of a whole congregation, depending on him for their salvation. What is he doing there? Just what John was doing in the desert. He is communing with God, trying to find out what is God's will, and getting ready to obey when that will is made known to him. He makes provision of those virtues so necessary to a man of God, namely, faith, charity, patience, humility. . . . In other words, he brings home to himself the virtues concerning which he must soon instruct others.

Sometimes people complain that there is less of the word of God in the sermons given from the pulpit than there is of the word of man. . . . Why should there be cause for wonder if the preachers com-

1. In omnem civitatem et locum quo erat ipse venturus.—(Luc. x:1.)

mune not with God by prayer and recollection? "*Prius aurem cordis aperiat voci Creatoris, et postmodum os sui corporis aperiat auribus plebis.*" —(St. Greg. in Ezechiel, l. 1.)[1] Communion with God. . . . Such has always been the practice of those fishers of men who really went out to catch, not fishes, but men, in their apostolic nets. Our Lord Himself said: "*Quæ audivi ab eo, hæc loquor in mundo;* what I speak to the world that I have heard from the Father."—(John. viii : 26.) And how cold must that sermon be in which there is nothing that comes from the Spirit of God. Alas, we too often forget, O Lord, that the work of sanctifying souls is more Thy work than ours. "*Nos loquimur foris,*" says St. Augustine, that is all a man can do. . . . God alone can touch the heart and move it to repentence. "*Ipse intellectum aperit, ipse terret, ipse movet, ipse ædificat.*" So before preaching, we must commune with God, that He may direct us in what we are going to say.

2d Point. *John is directed by the spirit of God.* For thirty years he denied himself the consolation of seeing Him who caused him to leap with joy in his mother's womb. He will even, later on, live apart from the apostles, the chosen friends of Him whose precursor he was. No doubt he would have experienced the greatest of joys in the company of our Lord and the chosen twelve. But a sacrifice is asked, and he willingly complies. In order to fully understand the sacrifice John made of his own will, we must remember that, even before he came to this world, he was eager to announce the Redeemer, as St. John Chrysostom tells us.[2] If he was so eager even before he was born, how much more eager still after spending so many years in the desert, in solitude and prayer? And yet he remains there till he is told that the time is come: "*Erat in desertis usque in diem ostensionis suæ ad Israel.*"—(Luc. i: 80.) He waits till the hour is come; but, as soon as it is made known to him, he makes no delay. "*Factum est verbum Domini super Joannem. . . . Et venit in Omnem regionem Jordanis, prædicans baptismum pœnitentiæ.*"—(Luc. iii: 2, 3.) He goes where the Spirit of God leads him, . . . He preaches what the Spirit of God directs him

1. The audience will profit a great deal, says Father Lallemant, if the orator be a man of prayer and recollection; for God, in fifteen minutes and less, will teach such a man far more than he could learn by very long and hard studies.—(Sp. Doct.)

2. Less. of II. Noct. Feast of the visitation. 2. There is no doubt such a conduct is a hindrance to the establishment of the Kingdom of God, and, therefore does harm to the audience.

to preach ; the time, the place, the subject, the manner of his preaching . . . all is done under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. John is truly the voice and the willing instrument of the Holy Spirit. "*Ego vox clamantis in deserto.*"

Where are now to be found preachers thus influenced by the Holy Ghost, who follow none but His inspirations, say naught but what they hear from Him, and by His direction? How many there are who even hinder the action of the Spirit of God by their human prospects and devices of their own.[2] How many in so holy a duty follow rather the inclination of nature, and yet the object of this duty is to destroy the sway of nature, and make way for that of Divine grace.

3d Point. *John's success is due to his mortified and holy life.* Our Lord Jesus Christ gave testimony of him before the multitude who had heard his preaching and profited by it. "What did you go into the desert to see"—is it a man without brain or mind? . . . "a reed shaken by the wind?—Was it a man clothed in soft garments," surrounded with all the comforts of life? Oh, no. You would not leave all to go to hear such a man. What good could such a preacher do you? No, you have been drawn first, then captivated by the eminent and visible holiness of the new prophet. Still we are not aware that John performed miracles ; but he was full of contempt for the world, a man who crucified his flesh and was entirely dead to himself.

An austere and mortified preacher is always eloquent. His eloquence acts alike upon God and man ; for, as Bossuet says, one must commune with God if he wishes to persuade men, since it is from above that grace comes, that is, such graces as those that move the heart and triumph over rebellious wills. Besides, there is nothing that so moves God to show mercy to the hearer as the mortification practiced by the preacher of His word, who takes upon himself, as it were, a part of the punishment due his hearers on account of their sins.

I see now, O Lord, the reason why some preachers succeed better than others, why some reap a harvest with very little efforts, while others are always sowing without ever being able to reap. The seed is the word of God, "living and effectual."[1] But some priests, by leading a tepid, worldly and sensual life, render their preaching fruitless, whilst others, entirely devoted to the glory of God and the sanctification of

1. (Heb. iv : 12.)

souls, succeed in gathering a most abundant harvest. Up to the present time, how I have prepared myself to announce to the people the word of God? Scripture says that the beauty of the daughter of Sion is from within. . . . Have I been persuaded that the greater the union with God, the greater is the success of the preacher? . . . . Have I always acted under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit! Have I mortified myself in order to stay the anger of God and draw blessings upon my hearers? O, my Lord Jesus, come then to my assistance when I go to preach to my brethren. . . . Be Thou in my heart and upon my lips, that I may, in a worthy manner, break the bread of life to the Christian people: *Dominus sit in corde meo et in labiis meis, ut digne et competenter annuntiem Evangelium. Amen.*

1st Point. *John prepares himself to preach the word of God by prayer and recollection.* Early in life he retires into solitude. The moments spent in prayer and silence before preaching are the best guarantee of the success of one's sermon: *Nos loquimur foris;* but God does enlighten the intellects and move the hearts of the hearers. Let us commune with God, and allow ourselves to be guided by His Holy Spirit.

2d Point. *John is prompted in all his actions by the Holy Ghost during the whole course of his public ministry.* He waits for the time appointed by Almighty God. . . . when it has come, he goes at once where the Spirit directs him. . . . He preaches according to the directions of the Spirit. Oh, how many preachers are actuated only by human considerations and worldly motives, and thereby frustrate the designs of God!

3d Point. *John's success is due to his mortified and saintly life.* "What did you go out into the desert to see . . . . a reed shaken by the wind? . . . . a man clothed in soft garments?" The way to draw the people to us and to God, is to lead a life of penance and mortification.

Same day; other meditation; subject—Trust in God. Vol. I, 856.

III. MEDITATION.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT—THE PREACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST CONTINUED.

1st.—SUBJECT TREATED BY HIM.

2d.—ZEAL WITH WHICH HE TREATS IT.

1st Point. *Subject treated by St. John.* It may be summed up in very few words: do penance. . . . go to Jesus Christ.

I. Do penance. The holy precursor shows how necessary penance is. He speaks of the qualities of true penance, and tells plainly how dangerous it is to keep putting it off.

"Who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come."—(Luc. iii: 7.) How will the sinner escape the terrible judgment and the everlasting torments unless he abandon sin? Not unlike the husbandman, Christ one day will make His appearance, "with His fan in His hand. and He will purge His floor and He will gather the wheat into His barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."[1] Penance, therefore, is necessary, and that penance must be one which proves itself by its effects: "*Bring forth fruits worthy of penance;*" that is to say, penance as He preaches it, must do away not only with sin, but even with its causes; it must repair the evil done; in fact, it must change the sinner into a new man.

And woe to him that postpones such penance: "*The axe is laid to the root of the trees.*" These trees are soon to be cut down, and what is to be their fate? Alas for the sinner! The tears of remorse and despair will not avail on that day, because they come too late. It is written: "*Every tree that yieldeth not good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire.*" Dost thou hear the word? O my soul, "*every tree.*" There is no exception, and that tree on which more care has been bestowed, if it remains barren, or if it brings forth bad fruit, will surely receive a still more rigorous chastisement.

1. Congregabit triticum in horreum suum, paleas autem comburet igne inextinguibili. (Luc. iii: 17.)

II. In order to convert men, John brings them to Christ; at least he holds Him before them as the great physician who comes to heal all that are ailing, and conquer sin itself. "*Behold*," he says, "*the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world.*"—(John i: 29.) He uses all the power of his virtues and his character to lead the multitudes to Christ, at whose feet he leaves them. On every occasion he gives testimony to the Divine mission of the Son of God made man. . . . He sends to Him some of his disciples saying: "*I saw, and I gave testimony that this is the Son of God.*"—(John i: 34.) Though born among men, Christ is before all ages. . . . My baptism is only a baptism of water, but the baptism of Jesus is one of fire. . . . Water cleanses the body, but fire penetrates into the very souls of men.[1] Ah, how he suffers, to see that the multitudes take no notice of Him that came to save them.[2] To make Jesus known, served and loved, behold the mission, the noble ambition of all holy preachers. "*Prædicamus Christum.*"—(I. Cor. i: 23.)

2d Point. *The zeal with which John preaches.* His zeal is ardent and fearless. In order to convert hardened sinners, he sends terror into their hearts, he tears the mask from the hypocrite. . . . To put a stop to scandal, he raises his voice and thunders with invective. He spares no one. . . . The proud as well as hypocrites he attacks with the courage of Christ Himself, whose precursor he is. When he sees the Pharisees and the Sadducees coming to him to be baptized, he exclaims: "*Brood of vipers,*"—that is to say, ye who instill into the souls of men the poison of your false doctrines and traditions,—"*who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come? Do ye penance.*" Such a fiery zeal the true preachers of God's Gospel must at times show, for the glory of the Master: "*Ignitum eloquium tuum vehementer.*"—(Ps. cxviii: 140.) "*And Elias the prophet stood up as a fire, and his words burnt like a torch.*"—(Eccl. xlviii: 1.)

O priest of God, is your eloquence penetrating, is it full of living fire as was that of St. John? Does it go deep into the soul? Does it wound the soul unto its conversion? Is it a burning torch, is it a cut-

1. "And I saw, and I gave testimony that this is the Son of God."—(John i: 34.) "I indeed baptize with water; but there shall come one mightier than I. . . He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."—(Luc. iii: 16.)

2. "There has stood one in the midst of you whom you know not."—(John i: 26.)

ting sword, is it piercing as a dagger? Zeal is only another name for charity. A good father does not like to chastise his son who is disobedient, but love prompts him to do so. . . And is not the preacher a spiritual father?

True zeal, as we see it in St. John, is prudent, energetic and yet lenient to some extent. If St. John sees poor and humble or ignorant people eager to become instructed—"*Et interrogabant eum dicentes: Quid ergo faciemus?*"—he has a cheering word for them. To such he promises an easy pardon. They will not have to retire into the desert as the precursor himself did; no, let them only practice justice . . . give alms and live according to their state of life. . . . All are called to be saints, and sanctity does not imply for all a very austere life, nor the performance of heroic deeds. Sanctity consists in doing the will of God, each one according to his avocation.

A truly zealous preacher is not elated by success. . . . He is entirely forgetful of self. An ordinary man might have been tempted to pride or vain glory on seeing the messengers sent to him and the rapture of the multitudes who listened to him with unbounded admiration. Not so with John the Baptist. His soul is at the same time filled with humility and confusion. It came to the minds of many that he might be the Messiah; even his disciples came and told him: "He of whom thou gavest testimony, behold He baptizeth and all come to Him."[1] But John reproves them. The more they praise him, the more he humbles himself. Far from wishing to pass as the Messiah, he declares that he is not worthy to loose the latchet of His shoes. . . . His sole desire is that they overlook the precursor, and prepare for Him who is to come. "*Oportet illum crescere, me autem minui.*" Truly that priest deserves little success, O my God, who looks for it, more for his own glory than for that of his Master. Provided souls be saved, what matter is it to a good priest, who is the instrument of their salvation?

A truly zealous man is not easily tired; nothing discourages him . . . . neither the multiplicity of his instructions, nor the ignorance of his hearers. . . . For all he has an answer and a kind word.

A truly zealous man is also brave; he knows no danger; he flatters

1. Cui tu testimonium perhibuisti, ecce hic baptizat, et omnes veniunt ad eum.—(John iii: 26.)

no one, and if he meets with a Herod, he will not hesitate to say: "*Non licet.*" To show regard for the dignity of a man or his social position, if he is wicked, is to become, to some extent, an accomplice of his wickedness; for the more exalted the position, the greater the harm done by his scandalouls life. John's liberty in reproving Herod cost him his life; but oh! was not martyrdom the fittest recompense of his holy preaching?

What a model is offered to evangelical preachers in the person of St. John! Thus far in the ministry, has my preaching been like unto his? Have I fought the good fight? Have I in like manner prepared the way for the Lord? Have I ever had that same burning, yet prudent and patient, zeal? Have I been humble yet bold in season? Alas! alas! to my confusion, I must confess that things do not stand so well with me. And yet, O my God, when Thou didst intrust to me the great honor of preaching the Gospel of salvation, I was more favored than St. John in many respects; for am I not every day allowed to eat Thy flesh and drink Thy most precious blood? O Lord, when Thou didst visit St. John yet unborn, Thy very presence communicated to him "the spirit and virtue of Elias." And will not so many visits from Thee make of me at least a zealous and holy priest, a man according to Thine own heart? Grant me that favor to-day, O Lord, and I will hereafter impart to Thy people the science of Salvation. Thou shalt first be born, and then live forever in the souls committed to my care.

1st Point. *Subject of John's preaching.*

I. Penance as a means of making souls abandon the ways of sin. Penance is necessary. . . . No other way for the sinner to satisfy his offended God. . . . Penance must be sincere and show itself by the fruits thereof. "*Bring forth fruits worthy of penance.*" Woe to him who postpones it. The barren tree will be cut down and cast into the fire.

II. Lead souls to Christ after having moved them to penance. Point out to the world its loving Redeemer. "*Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the the sins of the world.*" Oh how painful it is for a good priest to see the Lord so little known, so little loved.

2d Point. *John's zeal in preaching the word of God.* His zeal is an ardent and fearless one. . . . It moves guilty souls to penance, it prevents scandal and puts an end to their direful effects: "*Ignitum eloquium tuum vehementer.*" It is prudent and non-offensive, though at times very vehement. . . . With God, pardon is easy. . . . All are called to a life of sanctity. . . John is not elated by success; true zeal is humble. When all are in admiration of his doctrine, John thinks only of humbling himself. . . . At last nothing could daunt his holy zeal; he died a martyr to his duty, rather than cease to preach the Redeemer and the truths which lead to heaven.

Same day; other meditation—spiritual joy. Vol. 1, 851.

IV. MEDITATION.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT—LIFE OF JESUS IN THE WOMB OF MARY.

The mystery of the incarnation is already accomplished. . . For nearly nine months Mary carried in her womb the Son of God, and now the time is near at hand when the Redeemer is to be born. The Church at the beginning of the office says no longer: "*Regem venturum Dominum, venite, adoremus;*" but, "*Prope est jam Dominus, venite, adoremus.*" Sweeter still and more cheering is her voice as we come nearer the day of the manifestation of the Son of God to man. "*Blow the trumpet in Sion. . . . For the day is near at hand, behold He cometh, Alleluia! Alleluia!*" At vespers, also, she breathes forth her soul into a prayer of most profound adoration and fondest love: "*O eternal wisdom! . . . O Adonai! O Emmanuel!*" He rests in Mary's womb, He so long the expected of nations; and there, as in a most holy shrine, the most fitting temple He could find on earth, He teaches us more lessons than one, for—

1st.—HE OFFERS HIMSELF A SACRIFICE TO HIS FATHER.

2d.—HE COMMENCES THE GREAT WORK FOR WHICH HE IS COME, NAMELY THE SALVATION OF MANKIND.

1st Point. *Jesus in the womb of Mary, offers Himself a sacrifice to His Eternal Father.* From the very moment His soul was united to His body in the womb of Mary, and "the Word was made flesh," He commences the work of the Redemption. From the first moment, in possession as He is of the beatific vision, and having at the same time the complete use of His mental faculities, He embraces with one glance the eternal glory of His Father and the wretchedness of man, the offender; and He offers Himself as a victim of adoration and atonement. . . . He accepts from the hands of Providence whatever is destined for Him, even the bitter chalice of sufferings and humiliations by which He was to make reparation for man's transgression. "*Therefore, coming into the world, He saith: Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast fitted to me. . . . Then said I, behold I come, that I shall do Thy will, O God.*"—(Heb. x: 5, 7.) And the work commenced in the womb of Mary He will continue all His life-time. In all the mysteries that marked His life, His birth, His circumcision, the flight into Egypt . . . each step He will take . . . all will be the same offering of His own person to the Father. His heart speaks, saying: "*In the head of the book it is written of Me, that I should do Thy will; O my God, I have desired it, and Thy law in the midst of my heart.*"—(Ps. xxxix: 9.)

Soon the angels will come to bring good tidings of great joy to the world; but for us, we may even now give vent to our joy, for our God yet unborn, thinks of reconciling us to His Father. He already loves us. The offended majesty is already satisfied. Since the moment the Son of God became man, the Eternal Father found one to render Him the honor and adoration due His infinite perfections. Let us join our praise to that of Jesus, and it will then be most acceptable to the Father.

Let us learn here to esteem, to cherish the glory of God, and let us look for nothing in this life but the promotion of that glory in all we do. Oh the Glory of God! How truly great is he who is ever actuated by it

alone. Such a man lives and acts, in a measure, like God Himself, of whom we read, "*Universa propter semetipsum operatus est Dominus.*" —(Prov. xvi : 14.) How dear to God, for such a man loves his God with a most perfect love, and forgets himself in order to do His holy will. And yet such a man, after all, renders himself the greatest of services, for every action of his, even the smallest, the most insignificant, is done in the state of grace and for the love of God, and thus becomes of an immense value for eternity. The eternal glory of God ! If I had had it always in my heart, if it had always been the motive of my conduct, what peace, what contentment would I enjoy even on this side of the grave. I would have fulfilled the end for which I was created ; all would be in me according to God's plan, and peace and contentment would certainly be mine, for it is written : "*The fruit of justice is peace.*"[1] Peace of heart is promised to the man of good will, and he is a man of good will who looks only for the glory of God in all he does and says.[2]

2d Point. *Jesus in Mary's womb commences the work for which He has come, namely, the salvation of mankind.* God is truly glorified by His creatures, if they so know Him, love Him, and serve Him during life, that He, their God, may reward them with eternal happiness in the next. This is that sacred fire which Jesus brought into the world, and how eager He is to kindle it in every heart. He has always present in His mind the utter desolation of mankind, sitting in the darkness and shadow of death and contaminated by all sorts of crimes. . . . So . . . many unfortunate souls rushing headlong by thousands into hell's fire. Oh what a torture for His loving heart ! Oh, when will He commence to heal ? When will He, like a giant, begin to run in the race ?

That great work He even now begins. He suggests to Mary to take Him to the house of Zachary, there to sanctify His precursor by His Divine presence, and fill Elizabeth with the Holy Ghost, and pour His choicest blessings on all the members of that household. . . . But this is not all He does for the fulfilling of His great mission, the redemption of man. He submits to the will of His Father. . . . Enclosed in the womb of Mary, He offers to God His captivity and His humiliations. He asks and obtains those graces that will be granted to the priests of God even till the end of time.

How many false ideas may we not have sometimes concerning what

1. Erit opus justitiæ pax.—(Is xxxii:17) Pax multa diligentibus legem tuam.—(Ps. cxviii.)

2. (Ps. xviii:6.)

goes to constitute and to fortify true zeal, and to facilitate the work of sanctifying souls.

We work hard, but pray very little; hence our poor success. . . . We lose sight of God, relying wholly upon ourselves. God, consequently, abandons us to our own resources—exactly the repetition of what took place in Judea. Sectarian preachers expend their best efforts and meet with no success, whilst an unborn child brings down blessings upon mankind, and lays the foundation of that Church which will soon renew the face of the earth.

A good priest is never without an opportunity of doing good, whatever be his situation. His breviary, the Holy Mass, religious exercises, even his sufferings and infirmities, his trials and obscurity of life, all these he turns to a profitable account for himself and others. How much good, O my God, we can do in secret, unknown to the world, as unnoticed as Jesus was while resting in Mary's womb.

O my God, give me a heart like Thine, a heart dead too all but Thee alone, that I may be consumed by the fire of Thy charity. Give me a heart burning for Thy glory and the salvation of souls; yes, my God, give me such a heart, but grant me also to be patient, that I may learn to await the time appointed by Divine Providence. . . . May I also be guided by Divine grace rather than by the impulses of nature. Teach me, O Lord, the real value of the souls Thou comest to redeem, and how the glory of God is procured by the conversion of souls; and let this be my only ambition in life, when alone or in public, in the work of the ministry or in the solitude of prayer and meditation, that I may ever labor for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

1st Point. *Jesus in the womb of Mary offers Himself to His Father.* From the first moment of His existence, the Word offered Himself to the Father as a victim of adoration, praise and atonement. At each step He will take in life, His heart will always say to the Father; "Behold I come." Let us learn here from our unborn Savior to esteem the glory of God, and to always look for it in all our undertakings. Ah, the glory of God! Had I always been actuated by it, what contentment, what happiness would be mine to-day. Ah, then all things would be well with me, I would be a man of good will; and it is only to such that peace is promised.

2d Point. *Jesus in the womb of Mary commences the work of the Redemption.* Jesus, yet unborn, sees the deplorable condition of mankind, so many rushing on to eternal destruction. What a torment for His loving heart! . . . . He, therefore, commences immediately the work of redemption; and how? By prayer. He teaches us by His example to be satisfied with an obscure and humble life. . . . He suggests to His mother to take Him to the house of Zachary that He may sanctify the precursor and His mother, and pour a blessing on all in that household. . . . O my God, how much good one can do in secret, remaining unknown to men, as Jesus was, when in the womb of His blessed mother.

V. MEDITATION.

CHRISTMAS EVE—JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM.

1st.—JOURNEY FOREORDAINED BY GOD IN HIS WISDOM AND GOODNESS.

2d.—UNDERTAKEN AND ACCOMPLISHED BY JESUS IN A SPIRIT OF OBEDIENCE AND PERFECT RESIGNATION.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Try and place before your mind the whole world set astir by the edict of the Roman Emperor, whilst on the other hand the multitude of the celestial army surrounds the humble house of Nazareth; for He is there who is the occasion and the cause of all this stir.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Let me, I beseech Thee, O Lord, both know and cherish the paternal ways of Divine Providence, that I may always be submissive, after the examples of Mary and Joseph.

1st Point. *Journey foreordained by God in His wisdom and goodness.* Augustus Cæsar, the Roman Emperor, is at peace with the conquered world. . . . . He is eager to know the number of his subjects, the extent and strength and riches of the country under his sway, and he orders that a general census be taken. . . . That order is executed and his pride is gratified. But, oh the depth of eternal

wisdom! Whilst he thinks only of gratifying his ambition and pride, is he not, in spite of himself, preparing the ways of the Lord, and the proof of His Divine mission, according to what had been prophesied centuries before in connection with the coming of the Redeemer?

Mary is at Nazareth; thedays of her delivery are near at hand, and she thinks not of leaving Nazareth, though she well knows that Bethlehem is the place where Jesus is to be born according to the prophets. . . . She remains at home, under the roof of her spouse, and yet, in order the better to instruct man and draw him to love his God, the Son of God is to be born in a stable. . . Mary is the wife of a poor tradesman, and the Holy One that is to come must be a member of the royal family of David; . . . the name of the child must be recorded, so that the documents may show the date and place of His birth in an authentic way, and that the whole world may bear testimony to the perfect accomplishment of Messianic prophecy. . . . Finally, the long expected Messiah is to be born in the most abject poverty and destitution. . . . He who is to establish a kingdom not of this world, is destined to submit all other kingdoms to the laws of humility, patience, voluntary poverty and Christian self-abnegation.

All herein is arranged by the hand of God; His almighty power will execute the plan devised by His wisdom. Obedient to the edict of Cæsar, Mary goes to Bethlehem, where, owing to the great crowd of strangers coming like herself to be registered, she is unable to find a lodging-place. Thus it is that "*all things turn into good to them who love God.*"—(Rom. viii: 28.) Yes, all events, whether of great or small importance, virtues as well as vices, the ambition of Augustus and the humility of Mary, all tend to execute the designs of Almighty God. . . . Oh what consolation and what treasures of merit will be Joseph's and Mary's at the end of this journey, which, to a worldly-minded person, seems undertaken amid such trying circumstances. "*It is good to confide in the Lord, rather than to have confidence in man. . . . It is good to trust in the Lord, rather than to trust in princes.*"—(Ps. cxvii: 8, 9.)

2d Point. *Obedience and submission of Mary and Joseph on the journey to Bethlehem.* At the command of Augustus, the whole empire is on foot; "*and all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city.*" Joseph and Mary did not claim exemption, though they might well

have done so. . . . The sublime dignity of the Virgin, the far-surpassing dignity of Him whose mother she was soon to be; . . . the hardship of such a journey in her present condition, . . . all these reasons they could have put forth. But they did not. The two holy consorts obey the command of the emperor like all common mortals; they see therein the command of God Himself, and make not a moment's delay. "*And Joseph went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea to the city of David . . . with Mary, his espoused wife, who was with child.*"

Trials were to come, and many they were during and especially at the end of the journey. But Mary and Joseph were prepared to meet them, and remained full of confidence. Up to that day they had relied on God as children rely on their parents, and they were not disappointed. But in the present circumstance, they *have* an unlimited confidence in the Almighty, for Mary carries in her virginal womb the Master of the universe. Well might she say with even greater truth than David: "*Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me.*"—(Ps. xxii: 4.)

O my soul, didst thou ever realize how true are these words: "When Jesus is near, all goes well, and nothing seems difficult."—(Imit. l. 2, c. viii.) To-day my confidence should be greater than ever. Mary is about to give birth to Jesus. Already we have said in our office: "*Venite, exultemus Domino. . . . Hodie scietis quia veniet, Dominus, et mane videbitis gloriam ejus.*"—(Offic.) Just a few hours more and we will commemorate the great event.

And when does Jesus come to us more truly than in this solemnity of Christmas, on which we celebrate three Masses and receive Him as many times in the most intimate manner?[1] O priest of God, one would say that the fittest, the most pleasing abiding place for God is the heart of a priest. Yes, and if that heart be pure, if you really long for that blessed moment, oh how happy, how rich you are soon to become. O Almighty God, grant that, having waited with a longing heart for the coming of Thy Son, we may receive with joy Him who liveth and reigneth with Thee for ever and ever. Amen.—(Secret.)

1. Quam felix es, sacerdos, cui hodie non semel tantum, sed ter ascendere licet ad mensam Domini, ut vires labore fractas iterato reficias pabulo vitæ æternæ!—(Scut. fid., 25 decem.) Nullus, excepto die Nativitatis Domini, præsumat nisi unam missam celebrare in die, quia felix est qui celebrat digne unam.—(Con. Tolet., an. 1324.)

1st Point. *Journey arranged by the goodness and wisdom of God.* Cæsar thinks only of gratifying his ambition, but, without knowing it, he prepares the proofs of the Divinity of the mission of Christ. The prophets had foretold that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, that He was to be authentically recognized as the son of David; that, coming among men, He was to establish a kingdom, not of this world, but one founded on humility, patience and suffering. All is in the hands of God, and He makes all things concur in the accomplishment of His designs—the ambition of Cæsar as well as the humility of the Virgin. What an immense consolation was to accrue to Mary and Joseph from that journey undertaken in the face of such distressing circumstances!

2d Point. *Obedience and confidence of Mary and Joseph during the journey to Bethlehem.* The holy consorts had many solid reasons which were more than sufficient to exempt them from the journey; but all power comes from God, and they obey the Roman Emperor as they would God Himself. They at once depart. They foresee the trials in store for them, but they trust in God. What evils should they fear? Mary was carrying the Lord and Maker of the universe. . . . Thou, too, O my soul, shalt soon possess Him. O how sweet for a priest is his communion on Christmas night!

VI. MEDITATION.

CHRISTMAS—NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST—CONTEMPLATION.

1st.—CONSIDER THE PERSONS.

2d.—LISTEN TO THE WORDS SPOKEN.

3d.—CONSIDER ALSO THE ACTIONS.

FIRST PRELUDE.—"*And Joseph . . . went up from Galile eout of the city of Nazareth into Judea to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his espoused wife, who was with child. And it*

came to pass that when they were there, her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."—(Luc. ii.)

SECOND PRELUDE.—Picture to yourself the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem; it was a long and difficult one. Consider next the grotto of the nativity; all therein is cheerless destitution and poverty.

THIRD PRELUDE.—Beg of God to enable you to penetrate the meaning of this mystery, in order the better to love and follow in the steps of the new born King, who cometh to free us from the darkness and the slavery of sin, and to point out for us an entirely new mode of life.

1st Point. *Consider the persons present.* In the streets of Bethlehem you may discern a long stream of people moving in every direction; . . . strangers coming and going; friends meet friends; . . . all are taken up with the things of this world. On the other hand, consider the Virgin plunged in silent rapture at the thought of the mystery known to herself alone. . . . Behold her on the way . . . . she seeks shelter in the inn, but alas, there is no room for her. . . . In the grotto what celestial brightness lights up her countenance; how calm how modest, how patient, how close the union between her and her God. . . . And Joseph; outwardly, he seems a man accustomed to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, yet he is not without a certain dignity. Compare the recollection of Joseph with the bustle of all these others that move to and fro. Sorrow is depicted on his countenance as he sees the night fast approaching, and his incomparable virgin spouse unable to find shelter. Oh how more than sad he must have been when, pointing to the stable, he seemed to indicate that there alone they might expect to find a resting place for the night. O admirable Joseph, a few minutes more and consolation will be thine! But consider in a special manner the one that is going to make His appearance in this world. Who ever would dream that He is the Son of a King, the King of kings? Where is the palace? Where, at least, is the cradle prepared to receive Him? Like all other children, His entrance into the world was made in tears, but never was there a child born in the midst of such privation and suffering, and never will there be. What destitution we here behold? Even the necessaries of life are not to be found. . . . The season is the severest of the year, and He has no other

shelter than that afforded by an abandoned stable, falling to ruin and open to storm and wind. And still, O my soul, thou must confess He is the Messiah, the long, long-expected Messiah ; the One called in the Scriptures the wonderful God, the God of strength, He whom angels carry on their wings. . . . He is the Redeemer of the world and the Master of the universe. In a few moments we are to fall at His knees and to invite all creatures to bow down before Him in adoration. "*Christus natus est nobis, venite, adoremus.*" We shall have to listen to His words and study Him as a model, for "He is the light coming into the world to expel darkness, and woe to the darkness if it heeds not the light."[1]

2d Point. *Listen to the words spoken.* Joseph and Mary heard the conversation of the crowd around them . . . . vain, at least, and often sinful conversations they were. But take heed to what these two holy consorts say to each other ; they converse together, but how edifying their conversation ! All they say concerns Jesus and His welfare. Hear Joseph in a meek and honest tone of voice craving for a single night's shelter. . . . It is rudely denied him, and he is pitilessly sent away. . . Mary consoles and thanks him for all he does in her behalf. However, her words are few, for her heart beating stronger than usual tells her the time is near at hand . . . the Savior is to be born. . . . When he is really born into the world, O Mary, O Joseph, tell us what were then your words, especially those coming from your hearts? What did Jesus say to His Father, to Mary, to Joseph? . . . What does He say to myself? what answer shall I make? Can I refuse Him anything He may ask?

3d Point. *Consider also the actions.* You may here consider the facts ; how promptly the two holy pilgrims left Nazareth . . how patient they were during the journey . . . . how resigned when they arrived at Bethlehem, and saw all doors closed against them. Whither will they go to find shelter after their wearisome journey? After sympathizing with Mary and Joseph in their trials, after praising their courage . . . you may well envy their good fortune. The poor stable becomes transformed into a paradise. . . . Christ is now born. The ripe, life-giving fruit is detached from the tree without an effort ; the lightning flashes from the unshriven cloud ; Christ is born of the Virgin

1. John i : 5.

Mary. He came forth from Mary's womb, just as He will on the day of the resurrection come from the grave, without the least disturbance. . . . And now what feelings of joy swell the heart of Mary! . . The little child, her Son, is at the same time the eternal Son of God . . . her God . . . true God of true God. She is wrapped in an ecstasy of love and veneration. She presses the infant to her heart, presses her God to her bosom, and showers on Him her maternal caresses. She wraps him up in swaddling clothes, lays Him in the manger and falls on her knees in prayerful adoration.[1] . . . In the name of all mankind whom He has come to redeem, she thanks Him. But how she must have thanked Him in her own name, for all the glorious privileges granted her. . . . How eager she is to wait on Him. And the feelings of Mary are shared by Joseph. Like Mary, he gives Jesus thanks, in all humility, for the great mission intrusted to Him. . . . O my new-born Savior, what an immense love Thou didst kindle in these two hearts, so pure, so holy, so devoted.

Now address yourself to Jesus, Mary and Joseph . . . . speak with the simplicity of your heart . . . . say what you feel in meditating on this mystery. Ask as a favor that your own heart may be moved at the sight of your God just now born for you, and reflect on that life which, begun in a manger, is to end on a cross. May you learn also where to look for true pleasures, greatness and riches. O how different are the ways of God from the ways of men. "*Save me, O Lord, for there is now no saint, truths are decayed from among the children of men.*"—(Ps. xi : 1.) During these days, go often in spirit to Bethlehem, to the manger . . . . there you will find the new-born Savior, and learn from Him "the science of salvation," and ask for grace of its acquisition. After Holy Mass remember you possess within you the God of the manger; this thought will inspire you with great confidence, and such confidence God will surely reward.

1st Point. *Consider the persons present.* On the way . . . . on the streets of Bethlehem you see a crowd of strangers who come and go, friends with friends, in fact, all the citizens of the little village are on foot; but what is their preoccupation? On the other hand you see

1. Suaviatur ac liquescit anima ejus in complexu nati.—(Ludov. de Pont.)

Mary, all wrapped up in the mystery known only to herself ; how calm, how resigned ; and Joseph, how more than sad he looks, when, pointing to the stable, he says, more from sorrow than by his words, this is the only place of shelter. . . . Consider also who is the one who is about to make His entrance into the world. . . . Where is His palace ; at least where is His cradle ? He is the light of the world. To-day consider His example ; later on you will hear His words.

2d Point. *Listen to the words spoken.* Listen first to the words spoken by the crowd and which resound in the ears of the holy consorts . . . . Listen next to the words spoken by Mary and Joseph . . . the few words which pass between them. . . . Joseph asks for shelter ; how roughly the same is refused. Mary consoles and comforts him. . . . her words are few. . . . When Jesus is born, listen to the language of their hearts. Listen to the words of Joseph and Mary to the infant God . . . . listen to the words of the Son of God to His eternal Father, ... to Mary and to Joseph. . . . Listen, for He speaks to you also ; . . . . what answer do you make ?

3d Point. *Consider also the actions.* How obedient are the two holy pilgrims ; . . . . they leave Nazareth ; . . . . . how resigned at Bethlehem, ... but oh how happy when Christ is born. Consider the conduct of Mary and Joseph. They give praise and adoration to the Son of God made man. O Jesus, what an immense fire of love Thou didst kindle in these hearts so pure, so holy, so devoted . . . . Address yourself to Jesus, Mary and Joseph. . . . The great truth which we must glean from the foregoing meditation is this : How different are the ways of God from the ways of men.

VII. MEDITATION.

THE SHEPHERDS VISIT THE MANGER.

1st.—APPARITION OF THE ANGEL.

2d.—THE SHEPHERDS GO TO BETHLEHEM.

3d.—THEY RETURN FROM BETHLEHEM.

FIRST PRELUDE.—"*And there were in the same country shepherds watching and keeping the night-watches over their flock. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them; and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them: Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people. For this day is born to you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will. . . . And they came with haste and they found Mary and Joseph and the infant lying in a manger . . . . and the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God, for all the things they had heard and saw.*"—(Luc. ii.)

SECOND PRELUDE.—Imagine you see the country place where these shepherds kept the night-watches over their flock . . . . contemplate them starting on their way to Bethlehem, and finally contemplate the stable and the manger.

THIRD PRELUDE.—Try to become filled with the feelings of these poor people who were the first to adore Christ, that you also may share the many blessings they received on that occasion.

1st Point. *Apparition of the angel.* Who were the first to be called to see the Redeemer, and in what manner were they called?

I. There is not, there can never be the least contradiction in the conduct of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is born poor, and the poor are the first to be called; His first favors are for them, and they will always

be His dearest friends. He sends no angel to kings and the wealthy of the world, but He sends angels to the poor, hard-working and watchful shepherds; and St. Gregory tells us, in these He sees the future shepherds of His Church.[1] The poor, the humble ones of this world—these are dear to Him. He will live like one of them for the space of thirty years, and when the day will dawn on which He will go out to preach the kingdom of God, they will be the first to hear Him . . . in fact, it is to preach the Gospel to the poor that His Father hath sent Him: "*Evangelizare pauperibus misit me.*"—(Luc. iv: 18.) The rich, the proud, He will not care so much for; indeed, His mission is one of humility. Full well does He know that the wealthy and proud will take offence at His conduct; but cost what it may, He will not change the plan prepared from all eternity; no, He will sooner die. And you, priest of God, do you follow the example of God on this subject? Do you love those He loved? Is it among the poor and humble of this world that you find your delight? When you preach the Gospel, are you fond of instructing the unlearned, do you put yourself on a level with those poor hungry souls? In the confessional, do you welcome them with the kindness, the tenderness of a father? When called on to direct them in the way of perfection, have you never been of the opinion that perfection is not for such as these, because they cannot give much time to meditation and contemplation? It is a well known fact that these poor souls are more apt to attain perfection, because they understand better than others the mystery of the cross, trained as they are to daily hardships and sufferings.

II. The shepherds are surrounded with a great light; they see an angel and the sight fills them with terror[2]. When Almighty God is pleased to visit a soul, He first sends a certain terror into that soul to make it humble; but soon that fear is succeeded by a holy confidence, "Fear not," seems to whisper the heavenly visitor, "I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to you and to all the people . . . . they have been expecting the Messiah . . . behold He is come; today is born to you a Savior at Bethlehem. How shall you know Him,

1. Quid est quad vigilantibus pastoribus angelus apparet, eosque Dei claritas circumfulget, nisi quod illi præ cæteris videre sublimia merentur, qui fidelibus gregibus præesse sollicite sciunt; dumque ipsi pie super gregem vigilant, divina super eos gratia largius coruscat.—(St. Greg., homil. viii.)

2. Ecce angelus Domini stetit juxta illos et claritas Dei circumfulsit illos, et timuerunt timore magno.—(Luc. ii: 9.)

that great and long expected Redeemer? You shall find a child wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger." Yes; that infant is the Messiah. The swaddling clothes—behold the insignia of His majesty . . . the manger—behold His throne. The pride of man is here crushed, and here Thou really commencest Thy mission, O Savior of mankind. Open our eyes, that we may know the three marks of the new-born King: humility, *Invenietis infantem;* poverty, *pannis involutm;* self-mortification, *positum in præsepio.*

2d Point. *The shepherds go to Bethlehem.* The shepherds have heard the words spoken by the angel. However strange they may sound to human expectation, still they trust to the wisdom, power and goodness of God; and, guided only by the feelings of their grateful hearts, they say to each other: "Let us pass over to Bethlehem in search of the new-born Savior: "*Transeamus usque Bethlehem, et videamus hoc Verbum quod factum est, quod Dominus ostendit nobis.*" The angels had given them no command . . . a fervent soul needs no command; to point out the good to be done is enough; it well knows that good inspirations are like so many messages from on high.

Scarcely has the angel disappeared when the shepherds depart: they go with haste: *Venerunt festinantes;* how wisely prudent. The Lord has been pleased to speak and to make Himself known to them: *Dominus ostendit nobis;* how prompt their obedience. "*Amans volat currit et lætatur.*"—(Imit. l. iii., c. v.) Oh when, O my God, shall I be taken up with the things that concern Thee? when shall I, under the pressure of Thy love, forget the created beings? when shall I forget myself in order to search for Thee with the same eagerness as that of the shepherds? "*They found Mary and Joseph and the infant who was lying in the manger*"—a fit reward for their simplicity and obedience. The utter poverty of the infant God does not discourage them, far from it; it encourages them to approach the Savior who is so easy of access . . . they give themselves up to prayer and contemplation, and they show Him to the best of their ability, respect and veneration. . . . these good people spent in meditation the whole time they were at the grotto, though they scarcely knew in what consists a meditation. They gave their hearts to the infant God, and He, in turn, finding no obstacle on their part, spoke to their willing hearts. Let us be as willing as they, and Jesus will act in us as He did in them at the time of meditation.

3d Point. *The shepherds return from Bethlehem.* The shepherds could not and did not keep to themselves what they had heard and seen. Gratitude prompted them to speak. All wondered at what these simple people, whose veracity no one would think of contesting, told about the birth of Christ, the apparition of the angel, the canticle of joy sung by the heavenly host: *Omnes qui audierunt mirati sunt* . . . they wondered, they were surprised. But that was not enough for them to do. The could and ought to have gone to see for themselves . . . they could have offered a place of shelter to the new-born Redeemer; for what proof of belief is there in merely wondering at the magnificence of God's works? . . . God expects more than admiration . . . Yes; He expects man to co-operate with the grace He gives.

The world, the blind and sensual world, took little notice of what was of such interest to all; but Mary, ever faithful and attentive, lost nothing of what was going on. She heard the shepherds speaking with rapture of the vision, and she kept the circumstances, the time, etc., all they said she kept in her heart, as it were, to feed and increase within her the fire of love Divine. And in this she teaches us how to meditate on the mysteries connected with our dear Lord. . . . The shepherds returned with hearts overwhelming with joy; they told everywhere that they had seen and heard . . . they praised and glorified God still more by the sanctity of their lives than by the eloquence of their words. It is a sure sign that you draw profit from your meditation and the performance of your sacred functions when, after one or the other, you feel burning within you the desire of procuring the glory of God, and making Him known to your fellow-men. . . . May you go to the altar to-day as the shepherds went to the stable . . . . go with their dispositions, and you may expect even greater favors from the infant God.

Gaudens et exultans, O pater æterne, transibo usque Bethlehem, ad domum panis illius suavissimi, qui descendit de cœlo et dat vitam mundo. Festinanter advolabo ad altaris tui præsepium, ubi Filium tuum, Jesum meum, sub panis specie velatum habeo, quem multi reges olim atque prophetæ voluerunt videre et non viderunt. Illuc propero lætus, ut videam hoc grande verbum, atque stupendum amoris tui miraculum. Introibo ad altare tuum, optime Pater, ut immolando hostiam laudis,

tibi gratias agam pro magna misericordia tua, quam in Nativitate Verbi incarnati, non solum pastoribus illis vigilantibus, sed et nobis sacerdotibus, cunctisque peccatoribus exhibuisti. Respice, Pater, Unigenitum tuum, infantem amabilem, propter nos jacentem et vagientem in præsepio . . . . ; fac ut, illorum more pastorum, fide humili accedamus ad tractandum mysterium fidei, quod abscondisti a sapientibus et revelasti parvulis.—(Scut. fid. t. 1, p. 304.)

1st Point. *An angel appears to the shepherds.* The Redeemer is born poor . . . . the poor will always be His dearest friends. He sends an angel as a messenger to the poor. "*The poor have the Gospel preached to them.*" Let us love the poor and the lowly; let us be poor and lowly ourselves. The shepherds are frightened at the apparition of the angel, but the angel comforts them by telling them a Savior is born to them . . . . and He tells them, moreover, by what signs they shall know Him, namely, humility, poverty and suffering. Glory be to God in the stable of Bethlehem, peace be to men of good will; good tidings of great joy to all men of good will.

2d Point. *The shepherds go to Bethlehem.* The shepherds believe what the angel has just announced, and they are eager to see the newborn Savior. They go in haste. O holy obedience! When called, let us hasten away in search of Jesus. They find Mary and Joseph with the child who was lying in the manger . . . . how grateful, how loving the shepherds show themselves on this occasion! Jesus, as it were, Himself, inspires them to pray. Let us be simple as they were, and Jesus will pray with us and for us.

3d Point. *The shepherds return from Bethlehem.* With hearts overflowing with joy they tell everywhere of the nativity of the Messiah, and all in the vicinity are enraptured by what they hear from the shepherds. But it was not enough to listen with admiration . . . . what will it profit a man to wonder at the magnificence of God's works, unless he co-operate with the grace of God? Mary lost nothing of what was going on. The shepherds went home praising and glorifying God, and this they did more by the sanctity of their lives than by the eloquence of their language.

VIII. MEDITATION.

SAME SUBJECT—CONTEMPLATION.

1st.—CONTEMPLATE THE PERSONS.

2d.—CONSIDER WHAT THEY SAY.

3d.—CONSIDER WHAT THEY DO.

PRELUDES.—The same as in the previous meditation.

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons.* In a country place, an angel surrounded with great light. . . , Who is he? A heavenly prince . . . messenger from Almighty God. . . His countenance is beaming with joy, surely he is come to bring tidings of great joy. . . The shepherds before you, are a poor class of people and poorly clad . . . they were far from expecting the good fortune that is just come to their lot. They are a quiet, peaceable, upright class of people, ready to welcome the Messiah in any way that it may please God to make Him known to them. O Lord, those are they whom Thou lovest to commune with: *Cum simplicibus sermocinatio ejus.*—(Prov. iii: 32.) Bethlehem's inns and private houses are filled with crowds of strangers; perhaps some of Joseph's or Mary's relatives are among them, descendants also of holy King David . . . but they fail to notice Mary and Joseph on account of their poverty. Rich people, proud and voluptuous, sordid worshipers of Mammon, all kinds of beings, degraded by every vile passion, are able to find a place for the night; but the purest and holiest of God's creatures, where is she to find a lodging-place? Oh go in spirit to the wretched stable, and behold, you will find there Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Jesus, the Son of God, the splendor of the eternal glory of the Father, is there . . . He is there, a little infant stretched on the straw, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and pierced with the cold of a winter's night. The holy virgin and St. Joseph cannot for a second take their eyes from Him . . . angels are there in adoration before their God and King . . . and you, wherefore have you come to

this scene so sorrowful? What are your feelings at the sight before you? What profit do you expect to reap from your spiritual visit?

2d Point. *Consider what they say.* First hear the angel addressing the shepherds. These are terror-stricken: *Nolite timere*, fear not, he says . . . the mystery of the nativity begets no terror, but rather a holy trust in God. Heaven on such a day sends a blessing to everyone: *Hodie per totum mundum melliflui facti sunt cœli.*—(Offic.) God coming to us in this lowly condition, provokes us to love Him and not to fear His majesty: *Evangelizo vobis gaudium magnum;* . . . the great event has taken place: *Natus est vobis hodie Salvator* . . . and it is for you He comes, He is your Redeemer. *Et hoc vobis signum*, and this shall be a sign to you, to you poor and simple as you are: *vobis* to you.—*Vobis humilibus, vobis obedientibus, vobis non alta sapientibus, vobis vigilantibus et in lege Dei meditantibus.*—(St. Bern.)

What answer do the shepherds make to these words of the angel? . . Oh they think not even of giving an answer . . . they are already wholly taken up with Jesus; they say to each other: "Let us go and see."[1] What do they say at the sight of the holy family? What are the words of Mary and Joseph to the shepherds? But above all what does Jesus Himself whisper to these poor visitors? . . . What do the shepherds say when about to leave the stable? how do they express their gratitude. Listen, moreover, to the hymn the angels are singing, and let your heart experience the peace they announce to the world: *Pax hominibus.* . . . Now the majesty of God, His eternal justice are satisfied . . . there is no longer war between heaven and earth. . . . True, the sins of the world cry to heaven for vengeance, but the wailings of the infant in the manger reach the tender heart of the Father of mercies. Peace . . . says the angel, between man and man . . Christ is come to make them brethren . . . peace to all. . . His coming banishes the remorses of sinful man and conquers his passions . . . and the condition by which this heavenly peace is obtained is that of having a good will. The angels say not, peace on earth to the just and holy, or Peace to the repenting sinner; no, but they say, Peace to men of good will. . . As soon as one has a good will, a will in accord with the will of God, he may count on possessing the peace promised from on high.

1. Transeamus usque Bethlehem, et videamus hoc, verbum—Luc. ii: 15.

3d Point. *Consider what they do.* The angels rejoice at the happiness of the shepherds ; they rejoice as if it was a joy added to their own. . . The shepherds were men true to their avocation . . . they were watching : *erant vigilantes ;* . . . the first duty of a shepherd is to watch over his flock. Had they been negligent in this point, they would neither have been favored with the angel's vision, nor the first blessings of the Savior. . . See how attentive when the first word is whispered to them concerning the mystery . . . how docile also . . . they ask no questions, they raise no objection, they have nothing to say. . . God has spoken, that alone suffices. . . How united they are ; they encourage one another, they all seem to have but one heart, one desire to go and see the new-born Redeemer. . . They are not slow to start . . . *festinantes* . . . with haste they go. Not even do they wait till the break of day. . . . . no, they go right away to Him who calls them. . . I make no progress, O my God. I am always in a state of spiritual infirmity ; but no wonder, I am so slow to start at your bidding, and my efforts are so insignificant.

What did the shepherds find at Bethlehem? *Invenerunt Mariam, et Joseph, et Infantem positum in præsepio.* . . At this sight they fall upon their knees, and lovingly gaze upon the Divine infant . . . they praise Him . . . they adore Him . . . and offer Him their humble presents. Mary and Joseph receive and kindly welcome them. Jesus inspires His blessed mother to allow them to come nigh unto Him, that they may fondly and respectfully caress Him . . . behold He is in their arms . . . and He fills their hearts with Divine love. Oh what a sight! Oh what a befitting recompense for their generous obedience and ardent faith. Oh why have I so little faith, why is my faith so weak? These poor shepherds see before them but a poor infant . . . can it be that this is the Redeemer of the world? Not a shadow of a doubt in their minds . . . they make an act of faith with all the earnestness of their souls. . . True, the angels had instructed them beforehand ; but the angels have instructed me too, and I have besides the word of God Himself and the teachings of His holy Church. . . O my God, it is not instruction that is wanting . . . but strength and courage to profit by all I know ; grant me this courage, O my God, and no happiness can equal mine.

O my God, who could ever tell the joy Thou must have felt when Thou sawest these poor people at Thy feet? How Thou must have been moved at their candor and simplicity, and lavished Thy favors upon them! I wish to go to the altar to-day with the disposition of the shepherds. . . I believe as they did, and make my poor reason bow down in the presence of this great mystery. . . The poverty which surrounds Thee speaks to me of Thy love for my soul . . . to what extent Thou hast loved me. . . O the manger, the swaddling clothes! They speak louder to my heart than the brightness of Thy glory. Oh receive me as Thou didst receive the shepherds, and give to my heart the peace promised by the angel to men of good will. "*Fac, o bone Jesu, ut et ego, et omnes quorum mihi salus cordi est, homines simus bonæ voluntatis; ut qui de origine Adami nos damnabiliter esse natos dolemus, Gaudeamus de Nativitate tua nos feliciter esse renatos.*"—(Scut. fid. t. 1, p. 307.)

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons.* In the country an angel appears to the shepherds. . . The shepherds at first are terrified, but soon they regain their composure. . . In Bethlehem, strangers and inhabitants pass Mary and Joseph by unnoticed, on account of their poverty . . . in the wretched stable you behold Jesus, the Son of God. . . . Mary and Joseph wrapped in contemplation . . . and the angels in adoration. . . . What are your feelings at such a sight?

2d Point. *Hear what they say.* The angels say: "Fear not." The mystery of to-day is one of love. . . "A Savior is born to you." . . . good tidings for all. . . "Behold the sign by which you shall know Him." What do the shepherds say on beholding the holy family and when about to leave the stable? . . Listen to the hymn which the angels are now singing, and try to appreciate what they say. "Glory to God! . . . peace to men!" to all men, provided they be of good will.

3d Point. *Consider what they do.* How charitable the angels who rejoice with men. . . . How prudent the shepherds . . . . because they were watching, they were the first to find favor with the new-born Redeemer. . . They go to Bethlehem . . . once there

they fall on their knees before the manger, they praise God, they adore Him and offer presents. . . How are they welcomed? Oh if I had the same faith, the same candor! O my God, receive me as Thou didst receive the shepherds; give me that peace promised to men of good will.

IX. MEDITATION.

THE CIRCUMCISION.

1st.—CHRIST IN THE MYSTERY OF THE CIRCUMCISION.

2d.—WHAT LESSONS HE TEACHES HIS PRIESTS.

While preparing for meditation, let us make a generous offering of ourselves to Almighty God. He loves to receive from us the first fruits of all things He gives us; let us offer to Him this the first day of the year; aye, let us give Him the very first hour.

1st Point. *Christ in the mystery of the Circumcision.* In the mystery of His circumcision: 1st. Humbles Himself; 2d. He suffers; 3d. He saves us; 4th. He receives the name of Jesus.

I. *He humbles Himself.* The divinity of our Lord, His holiness, His eternal generation in heaven, His temporal generation in Mary's womb, scarcely less admirable than the eternal, etc., all these exempted Him from the law of the circumcision; to submit to it, is below His dignity . . . and yet He complies with the law . . . that law supposes the one that is circumcised to be a sinner. Ah what a humiliation for a God-made man! Sin and holiness; sin and the Divinity blended together. Surely in this there seems to be contradiction . . . . but no, for the Son of God is become man in order to save man from sin.[1] He comes to atone for it, so He takes it as a garment; the shameful garment of sin is upon the Son of God. His majesty is therefore veiled, . . . His glorious privileges, His divinity, His eternal holiness, make

1. He will free His people from their sins.—(Mat. i: 21.)

no exception, . . . He is come to work ; the word made flesh is, as it were, annihilated ; in becoming man, He put Himself below the angels: when He takes on this day the name of Savior, He puts Himself even lower than man, for He takes upon His shoulders the burden of the sins of man. It was on the day of His circumcision that the words of the apostle, St. Paul, were realized : " *Him who knew no sin, He hath made sin for us.*"—(II. Cor. v : 21.) And these others from the same apostle : " *In Thee shall all nations be blessed . . . Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.*"—(Gal. iii : 8, 13.)

II. *He suffers.* From the very first moment of His existence, and whilst He was yet in Mary's womb, Jesus offered Himself to His Father as the Lamb who was to take away the sins of the world . . . it was an oblation of Himself ; but to-day the sacrifice may be said to begin. His innocent flesh is made to suffer and His blood to flow. To-day He is really priest and victim. With His own blood, He enters the Holy of Holies : " *Per proprium sanguinem introivit semel in sancta.*" To-day a few drops only, later He will give to the very last drop of the same precious blood. . . . . His circumcision is, as it were, the first act . . . . the sacrifice will be one day completed on the tree of the cross. Even now He may apply to Himself the words of the prophet : " *Ego in flagella paratus sum,*" I am prepared to suffer . . . for this I took a human body. . . . As God, I could not suffer, but in order to obtain mercy for man, I became man : " *Corpus autem optasti mihi. . . . Tunc dixi ; Ecce venio.*"—(Heb. x : 5, 7.) O children of men, acknowledge your Savior. I promised to give my life, behold the first drops of My blood are spilt . . . and how I long to give the last of it for you. O Father, Thy majesty has been offended ; revenge Thyself now on Thy Son ; strike Him, but spare, oh spare the children of men !

III. *He saves us.* Yes, all the children of Adam He saves, for to all that are willing He offers the necessary means of sanctification. He saves us from sin by atoning for our sins . . . . to atone for our transgressions, He submits to a law that never was intended for Him. . . . To free us from pride He humbles Himself as low as He possibly can, taking unto Himself the resemblance of sinful man . . . finally, to atone for our sensuality, He condescends to suffer, though He is but a few days in life. " He saves us from sin," says Bossuet, " in forgiving

us the sins already committed, next in giving us grace to trespass no more, and finally in taking us to a life where sin is not known."[1] O infant God, Thou mayst well take the name of Jesus, for in Thee is realized all this name implies, and the blood Thou didst shed entitles Thee to it. Yes; take the sweet name of Jesus, that name which speaks of peace and love, and victory and triumph, that powerful name which expels terror, gives hope to the sorrowful heart, and conquers demons. "*Tristatur aliquis nostrum? Veniat in cor ejus Jesus, et inde saliat in os; et ecce ad exortum nominis lumen, nubilum omne diffugit, redit serenum.*"—(St. Bern. serm. xv, super. Cant.) O my beloved Jesus, blessed be Thy name from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof! Blessed be it for ever and ever,[2] that name which is above all other names. But it is always on our lips, for it means salvation to all: "*Omnis quicumque invocaverit nomen Domini, salvus erit.*" —(Rom. x: 13.) "*O Jesus mi dulcissime, spes suspirantis animæ, te quærant piæ lacrymæ, te clamor mentis intimæ.*"—(Offic.)

2d Point. *Lessons which Jesus teaches His priests in the mystery of His circumcision.* On the one hand He teaches them the value of a human soul and the desire He has of saving it; on the other, He teaches how to succeed in the work of saving souls.

I. The value of a human soul. Oh, it must be great indeed, since God submits to-day to the cruel knife of circumcision; and remember, one day He will go to Calvary for the souls He values so dearly. Ah when we witness the zeal of the Son of God for the salvation of souls, it ought to make us reflect. . . . if Christ does so much, why do you do so little . . . find no fault with God, but rather with yourself. Be you, therefore, more zealous, after the example of your God, for the salvation of your own soul as well as for that of others.

II. Jesus shows us how to succeed in saving souls. You must practice the spiritual circumcision, that is of the heart, and not the legal one, which He Himself has abolished. . . . Yes; the circumcision of the heart, which means the giving up of sinful passions and habits which lead to sin, and we know that indulgence in only one of these would be sufficient to cause our eternal damnation. . . . Interior cir-

1. Elev. 1, 17th week.

2. Sit nomen Domini benedictum, ex hoc nunc et usque in sæculum. A solis ortu usque ad occasum, laudabile nomen Domini.—(Ps. cxii: 2, 3.)

cumcision, by which all that is left in us of the old Adam is extirpated, and we put on the Adam of the new law. . . . This circumcision cannot be dispensed with . . . for the great reward purchased for us by our Lord being far above nature, and all in this life being unable to procure it for us, it follows that grace should conquer nature in order that life everlasting may be our lot. Christ says as much Himself to all who wish to be His : *Si quis vult venire post me, abneget semetipsum . . , et sequatur me;* and if it be so for all, how much more truly so for priests : *Qui mihi ministrat me sequatur.* When we are completely dead to ourselves, then we live to Christ ; and the more we resemble Him in life, the more apt we will become both to save ourselves and to save others. For that twofold end we were called to the ministry : "*Ipsi enim scitis quod in hoc positi sumus.*"—(I. Thes. iii : 3.)

Go to the altar and ask of God that you may be completely renewed on this the first day of the year. Discharge your duties hereafter with great zeal, care and purity of intention. Act as if you knew that this was to be the last year of your life, and that you never were to see its end. Begin to-day as if you were sure that such was to be the case with you. This is really a propitious day. Jesus sheds His blood to wash away your sins, . . . His name is the anchor of your hope, and His heart will kindle in yours the fire of Divine love.

1st Point. *Jesus in the mystery of His circumcision.*

I. He humbles Himself. Our Lord was in reality exempt from the law of the circumcision, for that law supposes the one that is subject to it to be a sinner ; and yet He knew not sin. Sin and the divinity cannot go together. But that we might be freed from sin, He took upon Himself the burden of our iniquity ; He was, as it were, clothed with our sins . . . and, therefore, His divinity was veiled for a time. II. He suffers for us. Behold how His precious blood flows, the immolation of the Lamb of God begins to-day. As He consents to-day to be circumcised, so He will one day consent to die on the cross of Calvary. III. He saves us. Yes He saves all the children of Adam, provided they be willing. . . . In order to atone for our transgressions, He submits to the law of the circumcision . . . to conquer our pride

He humbles Himself, and to subdue our love of sensuality He endures suffering. Infant God, Thou mayst well take the name of Jesus. Be Thy name praised from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof.

2d Point. *Lessons taught us by Jesus in the mystery of the Circumcision.*

In the mystery of His circumcision Jesus teaches us: 1st. The value of a soul. Indeed, when I see the life of my God begun, and spent, and ending in suffering . . . I am obliged to exclaim: Either Jesus has done too much, or I am doing too little. . . . He teaches: 2d. The spiritual circumcision, that is to say, mortification and the curbing of our passion. Later in life He will preach: "*He that wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself . . . . and come and follow Me.*" If this be the condition for all, how much more indispensable is it for His priests, whom He calls to lead a life of such eminent perfection.

X. MEDITATION.

THE EPIPHANY—CONTEMPLATION.

1st.—CONTEMPLATE THE PERSONS.

2d.—LISTEN TO THE WORDS SPOKEN.

3d.—LEND YOUR ATTENTION TO WHAT IS DONE.

We will stop to meditate on this mystery for several days. It is a subject on which the Church dwells with pleasure; and, indeed, it is one full of light and instruction. To-day our meditation will be on the general features of the mystery.

FIRST PRELUDE.—"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Juda, in the days of King Herod, behold there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem saying: Where is He that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen His star in the East and we have come to adore Him.

. . . And Herod, the king, hearing this was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him . . . and the priests being asked about the place of His birth, said He was to be born at Bethlehem . . . the wise men start right away, and the star which had disappeared was seen again, and went before them until it came and stood over where the child was, and seeing the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy, and going into the house they found the child with Mary, His mother; and falling down they adored Him, and, opening their treasures they offered to Him gifts . . . and having received an answer in sleep that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their own country."—(Mat. ii.)

SECOND PRELUDE.—Picture to yourself the hilly and deserted roads . . . . at last Jerusalem . . . . Herod's palace . . . . the stable of Bethlehem.

THIRD PRELUDE.—The Epiphany, or manifestation, may be termed the festival of Christian belief. Ask of God a lively faith that you may understand what is meant by grace, and how important it is for us to correspond therewith.

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons.* The star is visible to a great number. Many pause in admiration of its brightness, yet they remain in doubt. . . . Most of them pay little attention to it, because they are taken up with other things. . . . . Some suspect something mysterious, but heed not the call of God's grace. . . . after some time the star is not even noticed. . . . . But the wise men stop to think seriously, and finally they resolve to follow God's inspiration. These "*Magi*," or wise men, were men of wealth, of very high station in life, some say even kings or rulers in their respective countries. The difficulties in their way were many and most trying; but God calls them. . . . See how prompt they are to begin the journey. Their families they leave behind them, and when they draw near Jerusalem, behold the star is no longer before them. . . . they come to the city, they enter it . . . . how surprised they are to find that the inhabitants know of nothing strange that has happened. They go over to Bethlehem, they see the star resting over the place where the child is. Why did it rest on so wretched a dwelling? . . . . but how they must have felt when at last they beheld the child after so long a jour-

ney! Picture to yourself the inhabitants of Jerusalem, unconcerned at first, then troubled. See Herod and all around him; they are troubled over an event which ought to have been for them all, young and old, tidings of great joy. Pause a while and consider the happy mother, the incomparable Mary, by the side of her holy consort . . . . how noble her simplicity, how more than human her modesty, how recollected! The thoughts of the holy consorts are certainly not of this world. . . . You may see by their countenances how and what they feel at the sight before them . . . . but who is the infant child in the arms of the Virgin? Let our faith make answer. Oh how mighty in spite of this visible weakness, how rich despite His wretched poverty, how deserving of praise and adoration despite the obscurity that surrounds Him! In Him and by Him, all in heaven and on earth have motion and life.

2d Point. *Listen to the words spoken.* Everywhere in the East the people are conversing wonderingly about the star that has been seen in the heavens . . . . how bright that star . . . . what event does it announce to the world? Perhaps it is the star of Jacob, the harbinger of so much glory for the people of Israel.—(Num. xxii: 17.) Thus speak they all. The "*Magi*" were the only ones who said: It is the sign of the new-born King, let us go in search of Him, and receive His first favors. On the way they hear many talking, . . . questions are asked of them—Where do they go? whence come they? why did they undertake a journey in a season so dreary and inclement? . . . Some approve while others find fault with their purpose . . . not one is heard to say: Let us go also with these to adore the Redeemer. . . . In Jerusalem what do they say? The wise men make no mystery of their purpose in coming . . . . they even approach Herod himself: "*Where*," they ask, "*is the new-born King of the Jews? We have seen His star in the East and have come to adore Him.*" Oh what courage? How little they care for what others may say; how frank they are! *Vidimus et venimus.* In the "*Magi*" grace is not a minute inactive. . . . The news of their coming and of their inquiries is the sole topic of conversation at the king's palace and among the citizens of Jerusalem.

Herod, with all the cunning and shrewdness of a diplomat, asks them questions. They answer frankly. "*Go*," says the stealthy dissembler,

"search diligently for the child, and when you have found Him, bring back word that I also may come and adore Him." O what hypocritical wickedness ! *"O calliditas ficta, O incredulitas impia, O nequitia fraudulenta ! sanguis Innocentium, quem crudeliter effudisti, attestatur quid de hoc puero voluisti."*—(S. Fulgent., serm. v, de Epiph.) Who would not have been deceived by such alluring appearances. . . In the stable . . . . few are the words that are spoken ; all hearts lovingly beat in unison. How expressive the countenances, the flow of tears, nay the very silence of the adoring Magi.

3d Point. *Consider what is done.* Behold the Word made flesh . . .consider the Jews, then Herod, and lastly the Magi. On the day of His nativity, Christ had sent angels to the shepherds to call these poor people to His manger, so eager was He to do good to mankind. . . . On this day He causes a star to shine in the East, that all who see may come. Alas, there were only three persons to notice it, three persons to profit by the grace. Ah, what sorrow it must have produced in the heart of Him who had come for all !

By a heavenly disposition, these noble men enter into Jerusalem, they speak openly on the subject of their coming, they excite the attention of the public. . . . The learned consult the Scriptures and find that the time is accomplished. God wished to spare this people the confusion of being instructed by strangers about events that concerned them . . . the Magi inquire of the Jews where is the new born Messiah. . . . Oh how more than tender is the mercy of God, and yet men repay His goodness with black ingratitude. Unfortunate creatures ! They know the truth, but they profit not by it. Unfortunate these priests who point out the place where the Messiah is born, but fail to go and adore Him ; they show the way to others and they go astray themselves. These are they of whom later on the Lord will say : *"Dicunt et non faciunt."*

But what does Herod meanwhile? He trembles. The wretched man is never at rest, not even when seated on a throne. Herod is plotting in the darkness of his soul ; he is devising means whereby he may lay criminal hands on the new-born King, in whom he sees a dangerous rival. He pretends to wish to adore Him . . . but what can man do against his God? Herod's plans will fail . . . soon, very soon, all will know what is really his design, and from that moment to

the end of time, his name, on account of his barbarity, will be held in horror by the coming generations. Such is the fate of all hypocrites.[1]

How noble is the conduct of the wise men. They act truly the parts of wise men: their courage is unwavering; they overcome all difficulties by the faith that is within them. They part with all and everything in order to obey the call of God . . . they dissemble not, even before Herod. Though the star is not to be seen, they still continue their journey, and God does not forsake them. They are now before their King, their God . . . they know Him to be that poor child on the straw in the manger . . . with exceeding great joy they open their treasures and offer their services. . . . Oh how glad they felt then to have come such a distance in spite of the many difficulties in the way . . . and is it not the same God whom we visit in the tabernacle and before the altar? How is it that we do not feel toward Him as the Magi did, why do we not offer Him gifts after their example?

Address yourself now to God the Father . . . and to Jesus, His Son, and to Mary, and lastly to the wise men. Adore the Almighty, the all-wise and good God, who wrought so many wonders by His grace. Ask Jesus to accept your offering as He did the offerings of the Magi, and may Mary herself present them to her Son, while we say: *Suscipe, Domine*, etc.—(See at the end of this volume.

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons.* Some see the star and profit not by the apparition. But the wise men pause and make up their minds to follow the heavenly sign. . . . See how they set out . . . then behold them during the journey . . . remember the principal events that marked their journey . . . the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Herod. . . . Contemplate the Holy Virgin and St. Joseph when the wise men arrive. . . . Look at the young child; He it is that giveth life to all in heaven and on earth.

2d Point. *Listen to what is said.* In the East what do they say of the bright apparition, what do the Magi say? What do they hear on their way? When they have come to Jerusalem, how openly they speak of the purpose of their coming, how courageous they show themselves.

1. "Sic viæ omnium qui obliviscuntur Deum, et spes hypocritæ peribit."—(Job. viii: 13.)

. . . Think what the hypocrite Herod tells them . . . . in the stable lips are silent, but hearts speak. . . . Yes; the looks, the tears, the very silence of the place, are eloquent.

3d Point. *Consider what is done.* The Word made flesh is eager to commence the work of redemption. . . . He causes a star to shine that all who see may come to Him . . . how few, however, answer the call. . . . How much He does for the people of Jerusalem. . . . These wretches know the truth, but they heed it not; and what is Herod doing meanwhile? What criminal scheme is he devising? But how noble the conduct of the wise men. Their unflinching courage is at last fittingly rewarded. . . Address yourself now to God the Father, and to Jesus and Mary.

XI. MEDITATION.

THE EPIPHANY—THE EXAMPLE OF THE WISE MEN SHOWS IN A STRIKING MANNER HOW ONE MUST CORRESPOND WITH GOD'S HOLY GRACE.

It is true that by ourselves we can do nothing for our salvation; it is also true that with God's grace we can do all things, and grace is refused to none. The co-operation, then, or the non-co-operation is what settles for us the question of eternal happiness or eternal misery. Some refuse the grace of God, others put it off, and others grow tired of it. You have in these three words the reason of the eternal loss of so many thousands of souls. . . God gave the means of salvation . . . plenty and efficacious means these were, and yet those souls were lost, because they did not co-operate with the graces granted. What lesson can we learn from the conduct of the wise men?

1st.—THEY FOLLOW THE LIGHT OF DIVINE GRACE.
2d.—THEY FOLLOW IT PROMPTLY.
3d.—THEY FOLLOW IT PERSEVERINGLY.

1st Point. *They follow the light of Divine grace.* The star, says Bossuet, is inspiration to the heart; St. Leo calls it "*gratiæ signum.*"

How many in the East saw the star, and were satisfied with considering its brightness, but never troubled themselves about its mysterious significance? How many were there to profit by its apparition? The wise men alone profited by the grace of God which was offered to all. God calls them to the cradle of His beloved Son . . . they go forth despite all the difficulties of the undertaking. . . Used to a life of comfort and ease, they see ahead but the hardships of a long journey in an inclement season. They must part with all that is near and dear in the world and tear themselves from their sorrowing relatives; they must besides consider the opinion of men, who look upon them as wise men, and it seems utter folly in them to leave country and all to go guided only by a star in search of the new-born King; . . . the wise men trample under foot all these objections . . . they obey the call of God, they will follow the light of His grace.

See the conduct of these converts of a day . . . what a lesson for us who are masters in Israel, the preachers and the guardians of the faith.[1] Guided by a star, by that sign given them from above, these laymen, these rulers of their countries, leave all behind them . . . cost what it may, they go in search of their God . . . they go to offer themselves to Him, and to remain with Him . . . and you, priest of God, you have seen more than a star, and have you moved a step? Not unlike the priests of old, who told Herod and the wise men where Christ was born, you tell others where God is to be found, but you yourself do not go unto Him. You lead others to the truth and you yourself follow not the truth. We are, says St. Augustine, like the people whom Noah employed in building the ark. The patriarch was saved, but the builders themselves perished because they entered not into the ark: "*Similes Fabris arcæ Noë; aliis ubi evaderent salvi præstiterunt, et ipsi diluvio perierunt.*"—(De Epiph., serm. i.) With the Magi we may say: *Vidimus stellam;* who dares say: *Et venimus?* When at our meditation, moved by the sweet influence of faith, we have sometimes seen with terrified eyes, the abyss into which we were being driven by tepidity, *vidimus;* and have we then made an effort to shake off that tepidity, *et venimus?* We have seen the vanity of all created things, but is our heart completely detached from such things?

1. Sacerdotes....fidei magistri, rectæ fidei custodes.—(S. Cyril. Alex.)

At the end of a day we have seen how many sins we have committed through dissipation, but were we better the following day? Alas, whither are we going? At the hour of death how shall we feel when we will look back on the many graces which were given us and by which we have not profited.

2d Point. *The wise men follow promptly the light of grace.* Scarcely have they seen the star when they make haste to follow it. *Vidimus*, this is grace, light to the mind and strength to the heart; *et venimus*, this is co-operation. As soon as they are aware of their duty they perform it. With them there is no transition from conviction to desire, from desire to the plan, and from the plan to its immediate execution.

And in this, according to the teaching of St. Thomas, consists pure and sincere devotion: "*Devotio nihil aliud esse videtur, quam voluntas quædam prompte tradendi se ad ea quæ pertinent, ad Dei famulatum.*" —(2, 2, qu. 82, a. 1.) How wise is the man who is prompt, how foolish he who is slow and tardy in corresponding with the grace of God. Had they delayed for a few days, who can tell that they would have found the child. Coming to Jerusalem, they would have heard it said that He was no longer there, that He had gone to a place unknown. . . . If Zacheus had made no haste, when he was commanded: "*festinans descende.*" . . . who can tell whether he would not have been refused the honor of sheltering under his roof the Master of the universe; surely he would not have heard the blessed words: "*Hodie salus domui huic facta est.*"

When God speaks, to hesitate is a sin . . . . the least delay is dangerous . . . . grace has its hour. . . . "*Tempus Stellæ.*"—(St. Aug.) He who delays to obey may not have an occasion to refuse again, for the same grace may not be offered the second time. Has Almighty God promised to wait till you are ready and disposed? No! You must accept the grace when it is offered to you. . . . He that is slow in accepting grace, shows plainly that he receives it, as it were, against his own will. Obedience in that case is compared to a faded flower, a flower without flavor or perfume. Oh how patient kind Providence has been with me in spite of all my slowness and criminal apathy.

3d Point. *They follow perseveringly the light of Divine grace.* As

they had been prompt in following the call of Almighty God, so they were persevering to the end. The difficulties, the trials they met with, were more than sufficient to discourage any man less determined than they. See for instance: After having gone over the greater part of the journey, when they are in sight of Jerusalem, behold all of a sudden the star disappears. Now they are left to themselves alone in a strange land; what a situation! Do they then and there think of going back? Not in the least. . . . They go on guided only by the remembrance of what was once their guide; in other words they follow the truth, and truth is like God, it never changes: "*Veritas Domini manet in æternum.*" In the city of Jerusalem they find a cold, indifferent class of people who seem not to care for the new-born King . . . . the priests and doctors tell coldly of the place of His birth, but do not volunteer to go with them in search of Him. . . . Herod sends them to look for the child . . . . all these proceedings fill their souls with gloomy and saddening conjectures about the future, but their courage is not abated by these circumstances.

Let us go to Almighty God with a simple heart and a firm hope . . . . we shall not be confounded: "*In simplicitate cordis quærite illum, quoniam invenitus ab his qui non tentant illum.*"—(Sap. i: 1, 2.) "*Qui sustinent te, non confundentur.*"—(Ps. xxiv: 3.) If we look for God in that way we will be living the life of the just man: "*Quærite Deum, et vivet anima vestra.*"—(Ps. lxviii: 33.) At the first start in the spiritual life, God as a rule draws us by the sweetness of His grace and sensible consolations, and then we imagine ourselves as firm as rocks: "*Ego dixi in abundantia mea: Non movebor in æternum.*" But alas, soon the trials overtake us. . . . God is, as it were, hidden from our sight, and we feel no more taste for Him. Do we then love Him less, or does our God love us less for all this? No; nature only gives way for a time . . . . our self-esteem is crushed. What should one do then? trample upon the difficulties . . . . walk in darkness whilst it lasts, and rely on Almighty God. If it is expedient for us or in keeping with His Divine plan, the sweet consolation of former days will come back, the star will be seen again . . . . and then our joy will be in proportion to what we shall have endured in hours of trial.

Resolution.—I will always show myself ready to follow the inspiration that comes from God ; as soon as the star of faith[1] will appear to me. . . . I will not delay an instant, for my sanctification and my eternal happiness depend on my fidelity in this point . . . and Thou, O God, help me that I may persevere. I am prompt enough to desire and to undertake, but how easily I am cast down. . . . The least difficulty, a short privation of sensible consolation, and all is over with me. . . . I go no longer in search of my God, the sweet odor of His perfumes has no longer any taste for me.[2] O God, Thou knowest how weak I am, be merciful to me. . . . By Thy grace I wish to be true, but grant me the necessary help. Ah, never more will I refuse Thy grace, nor grow tired in following Thy inspirations, for well I know it is the only way of salvation : "*In æternum non obliviscar justificationes tuas : quia in ipsis vivificasti me.*"—(Ps. cxviii.)

1st Point. *The wise men follow the star and the inspiration of God's grace.* They were the only ones who profited by the grace which was offered to all. They were generous on this occasion. They sacrificed all they had, wealth, comfort, country, even their reputation, for their conduct was reputed as utter folly by many . . . many could say with the Magi : we have seen the star ; but how few could say with the same : we have followed it. . . . I know the vanity of created beings and my heart is still taken up with them. At the hour of death what great sorrow I will experience at the thought of so many graces which I allowed to pass me by unheeded.

2d Point. *The wise men are prompt to follow the inspiration of God's grace.* They have seen . . . that is grace ; they are come . . . .this is co-operation with grace. The duty is no sooner known than fulfilled. Let us go to God as soon as He calls us. . . . it is dangerous to delay and postpone ; when God has spoken, to hesitate is a sin . . . .the least delay may cost your eternal salvation. He that delays shows that he goes to God against his own will, and such obedience is but a faded flower that has lost its beauty and its fragrance.

3d Point. *The wise men persevere in following God's inspiration.* After they had made up their minds, nothing could deter them from

1. Quasi stella cœli lux fidei.—(St. Aug., serm. 1 de Epiph.) 2. Trahe me post te ; curremus in odorem unguentorum tuorum.—(Cant. i : 3.)

carrying into effect the resolution they had taken; and yet what contradictions, what trials were in their way . . . but truth changes not. . . . Why should we not persevere? Trials are in keeping with God's plan. I will always show myself ready to do the will of God as soon as it is made known to me, as soon as I know it by the star of my faith.

XII. MEDITATION.

THE WISE MEN AT BETHLEHEM.

1st.—WHAT DO THE WISE MEN AT BETHLEHEM.

2d.—THE GIFTS THEY OFFER.

3d.—WHAT THEY RECEIVED IN RETURN FOR THEIR GIFTS.

1st Point. *What do the wise men at Bethlehem?* They leave Jerusalem as soon as they have learned where the Messiah is to be found, and behold the star goes before them, pointing out to them the road they are to follow. This repeated favor of Divine Providence fills them with great joy: "*Gavisi sunt gaudio magno valde.*"

They are at Bethlehem. . . . Behold the star rests over the place where the child is . . . but what a place! This wretched stable, unfit even to shelter brute beast! Can it be the dwelling of Him who is the King of Kings? The wise men have not the least doubt about it . . . and here we see the perfection of faith . . . faith was strong in these men when they undertook the journey, stronger still it was when they continued after the disappearance of the star, and finding Him not they sought Him at Jerusalem . . . but at Bethlehem their faith is what we may venture to call an heroic one. They enter the stable; something within them tells them that this child is the Redeemer of the world . . . that He is God and all the name implies. They take no offense at the poverty that surrounds Him. The swaddling clothes, the manger, even the weakness of the child before them, noth-

ing of what they see is a scandal to them. Faith within, teaches them the greatness of the new-born King, and the chief features of His Divine kingdom . . . they fall on their knees praising and adoring: "*Non illis sordet stabulum, non pannis offenduntur, non scandalizantur tacentis infantia; procedunt, venerantur, adorant.*"—(St. Bern., serm. i., in Epiph.)

Oh how penetrating the eyes of faith! They acknowledge a God of all majesty and power in that humble child . . . at the foot of the cross, one day, they will know Him also in spite of the immense sorrow that accompanies His death. O my God, give me a spark of their faith when I ascend the holy altar. Thou givest light to the humble and lowly . . . for them Thou hast no secrets. . . . Like the wise men I wish to annihilate myself; show me as Thou didst them a glimpse of Thy majesty, and the world will be dead to me and my heart will love nothing but Thee.

2d Point. *The gifts they offer.* The gifts the wise men offer show plainly enough what an exalted idea they have of the child before them. Gold means the tribute which is due to temporal kings; they acknowledge Him as the new-born King. . . . Incense is offered to the divinity; they acknowledge Him as God . . . finally, myrrh, which is used in preserving the body from corruption, was a figure of His humanity, which was to suffer death for love of us. . . . So the wise men acknowledge in the child at Bethlehem their King, their God and their Savior.

Jesus is all that for us as well as for the wise men; let us offer Him gifts also, and may our hearts be as pleasing to God as were the hearts of the wise men. Charity is sometimes compared in Scripture to gold refined in the fire: "*Aurum ignitum, probatum.*"—(Rev. iii: 18.) We must buy that fire from Jesus and give it back to Jesus: "*Suadeo tibi emere a me.*"—(Ibid.) But how can we purchase that love? Bossuet answers: Love is bought by love. He who already loves, may love still more ardently; in loving your neighbor you learn to love your God. . . . Incense is burned . . . the perfume is the result of combustion . . . let us annihilate ourselves in the presence of God; again says Bossuet: He that denies himself and forgets himself, burns with the love of God; such a one is an incense pleasing to Almighty God. In the language of the Church, incense is also an emblem of prayer: "*Dir-*

igatur oratio mea, sicut insensum in conspectu tuo," and myrrh represents mortification ; this last preserves the soul from the corruption of sin, makes of man, as it were, a living victim, holy and acceptable to Almighty God.[1]

Let us go, therefore, to Bethlehem, let us open our treasures and offer with the wise men gold, frankincense and myrrh. Where will you find Divine charity if not in the hearts of priests? How will the faithful pray with fervor, if the priests are not faithful to the duty of prayer, and how will the people offer themselves a sacrifice to God, if the priests who offer at the altar the body of Christ do not first immolate themselves? O my God, grant me the very thing You would like to receive from me—an humble and contrite heart at the sight of my past transgressions, a heart burning with Divine charity and filled with gratitude for the numberless graces bestowed upon me, and for which I ought to spend my life in continued thanksgiving.

3d Point. *What they receive in return for their gifts.* St. Bonaventure has represented to us the wise men on their knees before the poor manger where the Son of God was born. He says : Their souls were filled with sweet consolation. After adoring the Son, they converse with the mother. . . . they tell her of the occasion of their journey, the many incidents connected with it ; and the virgin mother speaks to them of the mystery of her Son. . . . The Child Jesus with a loving smile shows plainly how pleased He is with their coming. On the other hand they gaze on Him with unutterable joy. . . . not only with the eyes of faith, but with those of the body also, for Jesus was the fairest among the children of men.[2] In return for the gold they have offered, says a pious writer, they receive the gift of true wisdom, which enlightens their minds in regard to the sublime mysteries of religion, and enables them to impart the same to others ; for the gift of incense, the spirit of prayer was given them, prayer by which they parted with the world to cling to God only ; for the gift of myrrh, God gave them the science of the cross ; He taught them the value and the price of the sufferings endured in life for the sake of God.

1. Obsecro . . ut exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem, sanctam, Deo placentem.—(Rom. xii: 1.)

2. Conspice et puerum Jesum ; nondum loquitur, sed stat cum maturitate et gravitate, tanquam intelligens, et benigne respicit illos ; et illi multum delectantur in eo, tam visu mentali, tanquam intus edocti et illuminati, quam corporali, quia speciosus erat præ filiis hominum.—(Med. c. ix.)

By the advice of an angel, they went back by another way into their own country : " *Responso accepto in somnis ne redirent ad Herodem, per aliam viam reversi sunt in regionem suam ;*" no doubt but they spread everywhere the news of what God had done for them. After adoring Jesus, they went away like so many apostles ; later on they will be martyrs. Oh how fast one progresses under the influence of the holy love of God. Behold. . . . a star directed them to go and look for the Messiah ; they learned from the Scriptures the place of His birth ; God takes care of them on their way back. . . . they were admitted to the most intimate communication with Jesus. To-day they give Him their gold, later on their heart's blood.[1] See to what perfection a prompt, firm and persevering correspondence with Divine grace will lead ! Let us congratulate the wise men, and let us beg of them that we be always disposed as they were, in order to obtain the same favors. In our preparation before, in our thanksgiving after mass, let us enter into the spirit of the Church, which is so well expressed in the words of the collect of to-day. The Church wishes us on this solemnity, which, in the East, is called the " Feast of celestial light." to ask of God to grant us that we may fully understand the incarnation of the Son of God, in which we believe now by faith, but which will be one day made manifest to us in the beatific vision : *Concede propitius, ut qui jam te ex fide cognovimus, usque ad contemplandam speciem tuæ celsitudinis perducamur.*

1st Point. *What do the wise men at Bethlehem.* They stay in Jerusalem just long enough to learn where the Messiah is born. No sooner have they learned it than they start. . . . The star appears again ; how great their joy. . . . Behold they are at Bethlehem ; they are more than surprised when they see the star resting above a wretched stable ; it is a trial, but faith is strong in these wise men. They enter, they kneel and prostrate themselves before the Child Jesus. . . . O my God, show me a little of Thy Divine beauty as Thou didst to the wise men, and hereafter the world will be dead to me ; I will love naught but Thee.

1. An old tradition tells that the wise men were as many kings ; after going back to their countries, they left all for the sake of God and died martyrs

2d Point. *What presents they offer.* By their presents they pay homage to His royalty, to His divinity, and even to the death to which He submits Himself in order to save us from eternal death. Christ is to us what He was to the wise men ; let us also offer Him the same presents. Gold is an emblem of charity, incense of prayer, and myrrh of mortification. O my God, give me what I know will please Thee, an humble and contrite heart, a heart burning with love of Thee, a grateful heart for the many benefits conferred on me.

3d Point. *What do they receive in return.* Their souls are filled with the sweetest of consolations. For their gold, God gives them true wisdom ; for their incense, the gift of prayer ; and for the myrrh, the true knowledge of the cross and a love of suffering. They go back by another way into their own countries, spreading as they go the wonderful things they have witnessed. They had come to adore Jesus, they go away His apostles; later on they will be His martyrs. You see what heroism one may attain by a prompt, generous and continued fidelity in corresponding with the grace of God.

XIII. MEDITATION.

THREE UNHAPPY RESULTS OF HEROD'S RESISTANCE TO DIVINE GRACE.

1st.—HE IS TROUBLED.

2d.—HE IS BLINDED.

3d.—HIS HEART IS HARDENED.

1st Point *He is troubled.* The example of the wise men who had come so far to adore the new-born King, the answer so plain given by the priests and doctors to questions regarding the place, the tribe, the city of His birth, and the prophecy quoted on that occasion, all that was more than enough, one would say, to make a salutary impression on Herod. It was the grace from above, but he heeded it not; hence we make use of the words of Scripture : " He is troubled : " *Turbatus*

est." A poor child in the cradle causes him to tremble. Who is that child? Is He a King, is He God? Herod would like to know, but he cannot solve the mystery . . . in his anxiety he is determined to search into the mystery, but the more efforts are made, the greater is his confusion. He nearly catches a glimpse of the reality, but his secret ambition merely serves to torment him all the more. O God, how terrible Thou art to Thine enemies, even when Thou dealest with them leniently! . . . "*Impii quasi mare fervens, quod quiescere non potest! Non est pax impiis, dicit Dominus.*"—(Is. lvii: 20, 21.) Nothing solid in their minds, no rest in their hearts. The light of faith is to them a troublesome light . . . they see enough to disturb that kind of rest which the wicked enjoy in the darkness of their ways; but not enough of that light do they see which dispels the errors of the mind and gives peace to the soul; for that peace is given only to those who are obedient to the voice of grace.

Had Herod gone with the wise men to the manger, upon seeing there the child whose birth caused him to fear so much, he would have been convinced that His kingdom was not of this world, and that He who came to give crowns of immortality cared naught for the sceptres of the world. He would at once have felt quite easy. One who resists grace resists God Himself, and God is not slow to punish such a one: "*Quis restitit ei et pacem habuit?*"—(Job ix; 4.) Like to Cain after the murder of his brother, the sinner is seized with fear; peace, true peace, is known only to the obedient. "If we will show ourselves entirely docile to the interior light of grace which comes from God, we will always be filled with that consolation which is the gift of God to souls that resist Him not."—(F. Lallemant.) "*Si me audieris et vocem meam secutus fueris, poteris multa pace frui.*"—(Imit. l. 3, c. xxv.) O priest of God, when your soul is troubled, when a cloud seems to overshadow you, do not remain satisfied with asking your soul the reason of such feeling: *Quare tristis es, anima mea?* Oh no, for you may yourself discover the answer, you have been disobedient to the grace of God. Beg of God, then, to forgive you, and cheerfully hope again for the future: *Spera in Deo.*

2d Point. *He is blinded.* He refused the light because it interfered with his passion; the light is withdrawn from him, and wisdom departs at one and the same time. Herod is no longer that shrewd diplomat whom cunning had raised to the supreme dignity; oh no, he is now but

a raving fanatic, unable to control either his fury or his despair. How strange his conduct! If he really believes that the child mentioned is the Messiah expected for so many centuries and foretold by so many prophets, what madness to think that he will destroy in His cradle Him who is sent by Almighty God to redeem the whole world! If, on the other hand, he believed it not, why, we ask, the enormous and unprofitable crime of which we know, and which caused his name to be branded with infamy to the remotest ages? Alas, he has even lost every vestige of common sense. He knows that the strangers before him have come on this all-important business to him, yet he sends them off without as much as an escort; is he not completely demented?

No wonder that all his plans fail, no wonder that his own schemes work against him. He is caught in the very same trap which he set for the purpose of ensnaring the wise men . . . he wanted to deceive them, they deceive him . . . his ambition was to obliterate the very name of the new-born King, and behold he makes it known all the world over . . . he wished to hush the event into perpetual silence, and by his own doing it will be known to the end of time. . . . Oh the horror, the tumult, the immense wailing, when so many innocent babes were torn from the arms of their mothers and slaughtered under their very eyes! Has there ever been a nation or a people who has not heard of the cruelty of Herod, one who has not wondered at the power displayed by Almighty God in this circumstance? And thus, my God, dost Thou bring to confusion the prudence of worldlings who try to work against Thee: "*Perdam sapientiam sapientium, et prudentiam prudentium reprobabo.*"—(I. Cor. i: 19.) True wisdom, true prudence, consists in fearing God and shunning evil.—"*Ecce timor Domini ipsa est sapientia, et recedere a malo intelligentia.*"—(Job. xxviii: 28.)

3d Point. *His heart is hardened.* By following the celestial light, the wise men acquired virtue after virtue; they came to the intimate knowledge and finally to the ever blessed possession of God. Herod, for heeding not the same light, commits crime after crime; from one abyss he falls into another, until he reaches the last of all by final impenitence. The demon of jealousy leads him on to measures of excessive cruelty. He is told that the one he pursues is the Messiah, the promised Redeemer of Israel . . . the world must go without a Redeemer if He be Herod's rival . . . he has recourse to cunning and

deceit in order to find Him out; he says he wishes to go himself and adore Him, and in his heart he means to kill Him. No sooner has he found out that the wise men have deceived him—*Videns quoniam illusus esset a Magis*—than he throws off the mask of hypocrisy, he throws off the last vestige of humanity, and consults naught but his mad fury: *Iratus est valde.* . . . He orders the slaughter of thousands of little ones[1] . . . this brute spares not even his own. A whole country is reeking with blood, so is his own palace . . . it matters not provided he loses not the sceptre. But oh to him cruel disappointment! He whom he wishes to destroy is the only one saved. Herod himself before the year is over dies by the hand of God in the wildest of despairs.[2] "*In peccato vestro moriemini.*"—(John viii: 21.) Thus spoke the Lord for those people who shut their eyes against manifest truths, and to such an end do they generally come who abuse the grace of God. But what is generally the cause of one's abusing the grace of God? An evil inclination of some kind which is not corrected at the beginning with firmness and perseverance. Oh how important it is to give ourselves over to interior mortification. Give way to your passions, and all is lost. No consideration whatever, neither of God nor of man, neither the multiplicity nor the enormity of sin, not even the terrible punishment which is in store for him, will deter such a man from his evil way. Let us, therefore, wage war against ourselves . . . the fight may be hard, but when it is over what peace shall be ours. Let us not be afraid of the work . . . after all it must be short; only a few days of struggle, and then eternal rest. Let us apply to God for help, and let us say with the Church in her prayers on the Feast of the Holy Innocents: *Omnia in nobis vitiorum mala mortifica; ut fidem tuam, quam lingua nostra loquitur, etiam moribus vita fateatur.*

1st Point. *He is troubled.* All that had taken place must have made some good impression on Herod . . . but he heeds not the

1. According to the most commonly received opinion the number of children massacred by Herod's order amounted to fourteen thousand.—(See Corn. a Lapide, in Mat. c. ii.)

2. Febri, tussi, dysenteria, podagra, morbo pediculari, putredine verendorum, asthmate et fœtore intolerabili percussus, animam truculentam exhalavit, adeo ut ipse seipsum occidere conatus fuerit.—(Ibid.)

grace and, therefore, he is troubled. . . . This is the first punishment of his resistance. The wicked are like the sea, never at rest. Peace is the portion of the children of God. Thereby it is that He rewards their obedience. O my soul, when thou art sad thou must know, it is the result of disobedience.

2d Point. *He is blinded.* He heeded not the light, and the light is withdrawn and wisdom departs from him. . . . Now we see no longer in Herod but a raving madman. He seems to have lost even common good sense . . . no wonder that all works against him . . . his conduct will only make more manifest to the whole world his own cruelty and the power of Almighty God . . . and thus, my God, dost Thou bring to confusion those who rebel against Thee.

3d Point. *His heart is hardened.* By following the celestial light the wise men went from virtue to virtue; by heeding it not Herod went from crime to crime. How vain all his criminal attempts. The One for whose death he thirsts, is the only one spared. Herod himself soon after dies in a fit of wild despair. . . . Oh how important it is to control at once and in season our wicked inclinations!

XIV. MEDITATION.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY—THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS.

1st.—EXCELLENCE OF THAT NAME.

2d.—ITS WONDERFUL POWER.

3d.—THE HONOR IT DESERVES.

1st Point. *Excellence of that name.* The excellence of the holy name of Jesus is pointed out to us by the apostle St. Paul, who, writing to the Phillipians said: "*He debased Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men and in the habit found in a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus*

every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and in hell."—(Phillip. ii.)

In those words of the apostle, we find the origin, the reason, and the excellence of the name of Jesus. The origin: that name comes from heaven; angels revealed it to Mary first, then to Joseph.[1] It was the Father who gave that name to His Son. *Donavit illi nomen;* for, as the Scriptures say, the "Son no one knoweth but the Father."[2] Hence He alone was able to give Him a truly appropriate name. No one ever pronounced that holy name before it was first uttered by the lips of the Almighty God: "*Quod os Domini nominabit.*"—(Is. lxii: 2.) He wished, St. Paul tells us, to exalt His Son in the same proportion that He had humbled Himself in the mysteries of His incarnation and of His sorrowful passion . . . *Propter quod et Deus exaltavit illum.* Yes; by His humiliation the Son immensely glorified His Father, and in order to recompense Him, the Father gave Him the name Jesus. You may imagine now what are the privileges attached to that holy name.

That name is above all other names, because all that is great and precious and glorious is implied in that name. 1st. The wisdom, sanctity, goodness, power, mercy and charity of God, by which we are to be saved. 2d. All the graces and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, by which the souls are sanctified, and which come from the fullness of Christ as from their mainspring. 3d. All the different offices, such as master, physician, father, shepherd, pontiff, all of which the same Christ took upon Himself in His quality of Redeemer.

The name of Jesus is above all other names on account of the privileges attached to it. When calling His Son Jesus and appointing Him Redeemer of the world, God gave Him as a mission to satisfy His offended majesty. Henceforth man's salvation is to be His work; men's fate is in His hands; He will open or close the gates of heaven at His will. Jesus means a king on whom all other potentates depend, and a judge before whose tribunal all must appear, and from whose sentence there shall be no appeal.

Finally, the name of Jesus is above all other names because it implies all the greatest privileges granted by God to His creatures; God

1. Paries Filium et vocabis nomen ejus Jesum.—(Luc. i: 31.) Pariet Filium et vocabis nomen ejus Jesum: ipse enim salvum faciet populum suum a peccatis eorum.—(Mat. i: 21.)
2. Nemo novit Filium nisi Pater.—(Mat. xi: 27.)

becoming man, and man admitted to communication with God by Divine grace, and destined to eternal glory hereafter.

When the prophet Isaias was announcing Him who was to be born, he called Him "*the wonderful, the counselor, the God of strength, the father of the world to come, the prince of peace,*" . . . . thus expressing beforehand, says St. Bernard, all the greatness implied in the name of Jesus.

He is called "wonderful" because in one person He joined the Divine and human natures. He is called "councilor of the Almighty" because in His quality of Jesus, He is admitted in the council of the Holy Trinity, there to plead the cause of the elect. He is called "the God of strength" because to save us He conquered death, crushed the power of Satan, and destroyed sin. Jesus is "the father of the world to come" because, by His death, He became the father of all the elect. He is "the prince of peace" because, by His blood, He reconciled heaven and earth. All these glorious titles given Him by the Scriptures are so many rays springing from the same glorious name of Jesus.

2d Point. *Wonderful power of the name of Jesus.* Listen to what St. Bernard wrote on this very point: "The name of Jesus," he says, "is light, is food, is remedy . . . . light to him who announces it, food to him who meditates upon it, a sweet and all-healing balm to him who invokes it. . . . How was the light of faith spread so rapidly all over the world? By the preaching of that holy name; with the holy name as a beacon of light, the world emerged from the darkness of infidelity to embrace the light of faith. It is not only light, it is food also. Do you not feel stronger whenever you reflect on all that is implied in that name? Is there in the world a better food for the heart or mind? Is there anything like it to restore power to our senses, to give nerve to virtue and true vigor to pious and chaste affection? The name of Jesus is honey to the mouth, music to the ear, and joy to the heart. . . . That holy name is the great remedy against dejection and the other evils that affect the soul. Are you downhearted? Let the name of Jesus be in your heart, let it be on your lips; scarcely have you breathed it, when the cloud vanishes and peace is restored. Have you been guilty of grievous offence? Are you on the verge of despair; call on the name of Jesus and hope revives. . . . By it all temptation is overcome, every passion is subdued. O my soul thou hast an

universal remedy in that holy name of Jesus, that name so sweet and so powerful."

3d Point. *What shall we do to honor that holy name?* Realize the meaning of that holy name, and then give vent to the feelings of your heart. Gratitude first . . . . it was for your salvation that the Son of God took the name of Jesus . . . . that name recalls to your mind the labors, the humiliations and the sufferings He endured for you. It recalls to your minds all the mysteries of His life and death, and the Divine graces that came to us through His meditation. Confidence next: In Jesus we find the most tender of parents, the most faithful of friends, and the most powerful protector. His name is a terror to the demon himself; when it is pronounced he must take to flight: "*In nomine meo dæmonia ejicient.*" At last, love: It would be very little to pronounce that name with our lips, if the heart, the mind, the soul, did not join to do homage to the holy name. St. Paul had always that holy name on his lips and under his pen, and the way in which he has spoken of it shows plainly what a love he bore the sweet name of Jesus.

We must, besides, try to acquire the virtues suggested to us by that holy name. When I say Jesus, says St. Bernard, I mean not only a man meek and humble of heart, a good, sober, chaste, single-hearted man in whom purity and sanctity reign supreme, but I mean also a God all-powerful, who assists me by His own strength to become what He wishes me to be. . . . As man, I must imitate Him; as God, I rely exclusively on Him.

Finally, the great apostle suggests another most excellent way to honor the holy name of Jesus: "*Whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.*"—(Colos. iii: 17.) Let us do all for the glory of the Redeemer, as long as He did all for our salvation. Let us thank the Father through His Son, since He gave us all through Him. After the example of holy Church, let us show reverence to that holy name whenever we pronounce it or hear it pronounced, and let us make our own the words which are read at the end of the Mass of to-day: "Almighty, eternal God, who hast created and redeemed us, favorably regard our petitions and vouch safe to accept with a clement and benign countenance the sacrifice of the saving victim, which we have offered

to Thy majesty in honor of the name of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, that Thy grace being infused into us, under the glorious name of Jesus, by the title of eternal predestination, we may rejoice that our names are written in heaven, through the same Christ, our Lord.—Amen."

1st Point. *How excellent the name of Jesus.* That name came from heaven. God alone could give that name to His Son, because no one knows the Son except the Father. In giving Him that name, He wished to exalt His son in the same proportion as the Son had humbled Himself during His mortal life. That name is above every other name, because it supposes all perfections in the one to whom it is given ; because, also, immense privileges are attached to it. In receiving it, Jesus was appointed the arbiter between God and man, and the restorer of Divine glory. Isaias foretold the grandeur of that name when he said that the Messiah would be called "*the wonderful, the counselor, the strong God, the father of the world to come, and the prince of peace.*"

2d Point. *Wonderful effects of that name.* It is light to him who hears it preached, it is food to him who thinks on it, is medicine to him who invokes it. It was owing to the preaching of the holy name that the light of faith spread with such rapidity throughout the world. Can there be a better food for the mind or for the heart? Is there to be found a remedy as safe as it against despondency and the other evils that afflict the souls of men?

3d Point. *What to do to honor the holy name.* First, study well the meaning of that holy name, and try to acquire the different virtues it suggests—gratitude, confidence, love. Try to practice the virtues which shine so conspicuously in Jesus. "*Whatever you do, do it through our Lord Jesus Christ, returning thanks through Him to the Father.*" Show some mark of reverence when you pronounce or hear the name of Jesus pronounced by others.

XV. MEDITATION.

PURIFICATION OF MARY—PRESENTATION OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE—CONTEMPLATION.

1st.—CONSIDER THE PARTIES TO THESE MYSTERIES.

2d.—LISTEN TO WHAT THEY SAY.

3d.—CONSIDER WHAT THEY DO.

FIRST PRELUDE.—"*And after the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord . . . and behold there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon; and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was in him . . . and he came by the Spirit into the temple, and when His parents brought Him according to the custom of the law, he also took Him into his arms, and blessed God and said: "Now thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word, in peace . . . and there was a prophetess, called Anna. . . . Now she, at the same hour, coming in, gave praise to the Lord, and spoke of him to all who looked for the redemption of Israel.*"—(Luc. ii.)

SECOND PRELUDE.—Ask of God that you may derive much good from this meditation. May He grant you the spirit of sacrifice, of humility, obedience, and fervor in His service.

1st Point. *Consider the parties to these mysteries.* In heaven the blessed Trinity, after long expectation, receives the noblest offering that ever was made by man to God. . . . Angels in rapture gaze on the sight. At Bethlehem, at Jerusalem, on the way, passers-by take no notice of a poor family, by far the noblest that was ever seen on earth . . . but what matters the notice of the world . . . Jesus in the arms now of Mary, now of Joseph, and finally in those of the holy old man Simeon . . . and now on the altar . . . with a

look which combines together the charm of infancy with the sense of mature age, He gazes on His mother and those who surround her.[1] Mary at first surrounded by other women, nothing to distinguish her among them but her more than angelic modesty . . . shortly after see her on her knees, before the altar, offering to God the treasure He has bestowed upon her . . . read if you can on her countenance what is going on within her . . . O blessed Mary, what an one thou holdest in thy arms, the Savior of the world, the ransom of all mankind! But ah, poor mother, she must feel already the immense sufferings, the ignominious death of that infant far more precious to her than life . . . Simeon is overwhelmed with joy; his happiness is such that he seems to have shaken off old age. . . . Anna also is filled with love; oh what would she not do to make known to the world the infant Redeemer! What an abundant subject of meditation is here to be found for a pious soul.

2d Point. *Consider what they say.* Mary and Joseph converse with each other on the way between Bethlehem and Jerusulem. . . . . What was the subject of their conversation? The two consorts conversed interiorly with Jesus, the innocent victim they were about to lay on the altar. What did Mary say when she offered to God the true Lamb of God? Oh what a beautiful lesson for the priest about to go to the altar! Receive, eternal Father, Thy Son, who is also mine . . . through obedience for the law I offer him, because He is the first-born of his mother. . . . In Him and through Him, be Thou praised forever. He is my Thanksgiving and that of the whole world. Through His infinite merits show mercy to men, show mercy especially to the poor sinners. Receive at the same time the sacrifice of the mother and that of Thy Son; Thou, O God, the beginning and the end, and Lord of all; to Thee be praise forever, let the world bow and acknowledge Thy dominion.[2] Consider next the canticle of Simeon: "*Nunc dimittis.*" Thou dost now dismiss Thy servant in peace . . . let my eyes be now closed; they have seen enough since they have beheld the light and salvation of mankind . . . when one has tasted the sweet presence of Jesus, what more can he wish for on earth. Listen to what the

1. Cum maturitate et gravitate, tanquam intelligens, benigne respicitillos.—(St. Bonav. Med. c. ix.)

2. St. Bonav., Ibid.

same prophet says concerning the Son and the mother. "O peerless mother, what sorrows are in store for thee. . . . I see the sword that is to pierce thy heart . . . that Son, that darling child, He will be the cause of all thy sorrows; He will be contradicted. True enough He is come to this world to redeem it, and yet how many will be eternally unhappy for not having heeded His benefits" . . . Holy widow speaks, also under the inspiration from above; she answers that the prophesies are at an end, the Messiah is come . . . she proclaims the greatness of the child to all who expected the consolation of Israel.

3d Point. *Consider what they do.* Mary and Joseph leave their humble home . . . the humble spot where they had spent so many sweet hours. True, they were destitute in the eyes of the world, but what, O God, can be wanting to him who possesses Thee, and is aware of it? They start . . . go with them . . . see the Son in the arms of His mother: He is the light with which the woman of the Gospel goes about looking for the lost groat, that is, the doomed world. . . . He is the treasure which is to be paid for the ransom of the universe. Now they are at Jerusalem, they go toward the temple. Joseph carries the humble offering the mother must present to the priest —a pair of turtle doves, as the law says in regard to the poor. He has also with him the five shekels to redeem the first-born. As they ascend the steps, behold the just man Simeon, inspired by the Holy Ghost and prompted by the desires of His soul, moves slowly toward the house of God, to see the Lord's annointed, according to the promise that had been made to him. . . . No sooner has he seen Him, than by Divine revelation, he knows the whole mystery. He falls on his knees and adores the Son in Mary's arms. Mary also knows all. . . . She presents her Son to the prophet, who takes Him up with reverence, then rising from where he knelt, blessed God saying: "*Nunc dimittis.*" He tells of the contradictions of the Son and the martyrdom of the mother. Next comes Anna, remarkable by her virtue more yet than by her age. This old couple, a figure of the old law, unite together in praise of the *child*, who comes to renew the face of the earth and save mankind. Simeon gives back the child to Mary, who is to offer Him to God. The mysterious birds are also offered, the money is paid—all the law prescribed is now complied with. After

some time spent in adoration in the temple, which had so many sweet recollections for Mary, she, the virgin mother, in company with Joseph, goes out, pressing to her bosom the youthful victim who is to grow up henceforth under her eyes, till the great day of the immolation is at hand.

Converse now awhile with Jesus, Mary, Joseph and Simeon. Beg of Mary to make up by her fervor for the coldness of your disposition, when you perform at the altar an act far more solemn than the one performed by her in the temple of Jerusalem. Ask, through her intercession, for a spirit of purity, zeal, sacrifice and obedience. This will be the fruit of your meditation.

RESOLUTION.—Renew now and then the consecration made of yourself to the glory of God, and in your daily conduct bring home to yourself the words of the apostle: "*Ecce venio . . . ut faciam, Deus, voluntatem tuam.*"—(Heb. x: 7.) *Suscipe, Domine*, etc.

1st Point. *Consider the parties to these mysteries.* In heaven the Holy Trinity receives the noblest offering that ever was made by man to God. In Bethlehem, at Jerusalem, the grandest family that was ever on earth passes unnoticed. . . . Jesus in the arms of Mary . . . of Joseph and of Simeon . . . on the altar. Mary not distinguished from other women . . . there on her knees offering to Almighty God her Divine Son. . . . Happy yet, O poor mother! Simeon in rapture and beside himself with the intensity of love.

2d Point. *Consider what they say.* Mary and Joseph converse with each other on the way . . . what Mary says when offering the true Lamb of God . . . Simeon's canticle . . . he foretells the glory of the Son and His contradictions, and the martyrdom of the mother. . . . The holy widow speaks also.

3d Point. *Consider what they do.* Mary and Joseph leave their poor yet happy home. Jesus was there with them. They are now at Jerusalem . . . they go up to the temple. . . . Simeon, overwhelmed with joy, adores the infant in the arms of the mother . . . takes it in his own . . . the price for redeeming the child is paid, all the law requires is now complied with. . . . Renew now and then your consecration to God and bring home to yourself in your daily actions the words of St. Paul: "*Ecce venio*," etc. "Behold I come, O Lord, that I may do Thy will."

XVI. MEDITATION.

SAME SUBJECT.

1st.—OBEDIENCE EXALTED IN THIS MYSTERY, AND ALL REASONS FOR NOT PRACTICING IT VICTORIOUSLY REFUTED.

2d.—HOW MARY COMPLIED WITH THE LAW OF PURIFICATION.

3d.—HOW JESUS WAS FIRST PRESENTED, THEN REDEEMED, BY MARY.

1st Point. *All arguments in favor of disobedience answered by the examples given us in this mystery.* Here we see a double law is complied with.

The first law concerned the first-born. He was to be offered to the Lord, to show God's dominion over men, and also in remembrance of the death among the Egyptian children, whilst all were saved among the children of Israel. Surely that law did not concern Jesus, who, being God, had, like His Father, supreme dominion over all things. As to the slaughter of the Egyptian children, He it was who Himself was pleased to show in this manner His justice and His mercy. He had no need of being reminded of it. Besides, how is He to be held up as the Redeemer of the people if He Himself must be redeemed? In our own opinion, dispensation in this case was not only legitimate, but necessary; yet eternal wisdom thought differently.

The second law concerned mothers. These were reputed unclean by the very fact that they had given birth to a child. "They were, as it were, excommunicated," says Bossuet, "on account of their fecundity: it was such a misfortune to be born in those days." For forty or sixty days, according to the sex of the child, the women could not touch anything holy, neither could they go to the temple. But Mary, the chaste spouse of the Holy Ghost, was far from being an ordinary mother. A virgin at the conception, a virgin she was when she brought forth her child. Always spotless, she became still more so while carry-

ing in her womb the God of all purity. And yet she submits to the law; she thinks herself bound to do so for the edification of others. Far from claiming exemption from a law that put her on the same level with others, and which takes from her, apparently at least, the glorious privilege of her virginity which she was so anxious to preserve,[1] she shows herself eager to comply with the very letter of that law. After such an example, coming after the one given by Jesus, who will now look for excuses? Oh when shall we, after the examples of Jesus and Mary, find our delight in the glory of God and the edification of our neighbor? Alas, how quick we are to look for reasons and excuses![2] If we see God only in him who commands; if we look only for His will, we shall always comply, we shall even find delight in being humbled.

2d Point. *How does Mary comply with the law of purification?*

The letter as well as the spirit of the law is complied with. In spite of her glorious privilege of being the mother of God, Mary stops in the first court of the temple, like other women, who entered not the second till the purification had taken place. She humbles herself before the priest, who prays for her as he does for others. For her is offered, as for others, not only the sacrifice of adoration or the holocaust, but even the sacrifice for sin: "*Unum in holocaustum et alterum pro peccato: orabit que pro ea sacerdos, et sic mundabitur.*"—(Lev. xii: 8.) On beholding her on her knees, in the attitude of a penitent amongst a crowd of sinful women, who would take her to be the queen of angels and the queen of virgins? But God knows how pure she is, and that is enough for her; she cares not for what people may say. She honors in her person the sanctity of God, in comparison with whose sanctity the perfection of man is less than a shadow. She teaches me to humble myself and to purify my heart when I enter the "dreadful place" to perform any duty or to offer the same victim which she herself once offered. She teaches me to make little of the opinion of men. I am

1. Luc. i:34.

2. Bossuet illustrates this by an example. The director of a priest, seeing that his penitent had lost the spirit of his sacred character, deemed necessary, after mature reflection, to advise him to retire into a solitude for some time. What does the penitent say? "People will think I went to do penance for my sins; my name as a priest will suffer by it." Jesus and Mary did not argue thus. Jesus says not, They will hold Me as a sinner if I submit to the circumcision or presentation. . . . Mary says not, They will look at me as to an ordinary woman if I submit to the law of purification; it would be to lower myself and my Son.—(3d elevation, 18th week.)

only what I am before God. Men's opinion neither adds nor takes away anything from me.

O Mary, thy virtues fill me with admiration and confusion. The glory of a mother is to find in her children some resemblance with herself; when will I be somewhat like unto thee? Purity and humility are required by my holy office, and alas, I lack both. Pride and sensuality so often stain my soul! But I will go to thee and say what the leper will some day say to Jesus: "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." Mother of Jesus, My mother, I am sure, thou sayest, "I will . . . be thou made clean."[1]

3d Point. *How Jesus was first presented, then redeemed, by Mary.* After her purification, Mary passed from the first court into the second. In front of the altar, says St. Bonaventure,[2] she bends the knees and offers her beloved Son. Jesus offers Himself as He will do later on, by the hands of His priests. He renews the consecration He had already made of His own person to the Father at the hour of His conception: *Ingrediens mundum;* He gives Himself, body and soul, His natural as well as His mystical body. With His own person, He offers at the same time, as our head, all those who will one day belong to Him. Surely His priests were present in His mind. He offered them to His Father as His co-workers and helpers, and the Father accepted them, saying: "*Eritis mihi sancti, quia sanctus sum ego Dominus, et separavi vos . . . ut essetis mei.*"—(Lev. xx: 26.) Have I always thought in what measure I was the property of God?

Jesus after this was no longer His own master. . . . He belonged neither to Mary nor to the people; He belonged solely to His Father. Mary redeems Him . . . . she does so as much for us as for herself; with what joy she received Him from the priest after paying for Him five shekels as the law required! O how little is paid for the owner of heaven and earth! Poor mother! you will not keep Him very long . . . you will see Him one day sold for thirty pieces of silver and dragged to the place of execution. O first-born of God, redeemed for me in Thy infancy, sold for me at the end of Thy life. . . . I wish now to redeem myself from the pleasures of this

1. Marc. i: 40.

2. St. Bonav., Med. vi: 11.

wicked world. I wish to sell myself for Thee and to spend myself in works of charity.[1]

Return thanks to God, for having given you His own Son . . . if you are more the property of God than the laity in virtue of your state of life. . . . God is also more your property by the privilege of your exalted office. Go to the altar with a mind determined to make a better use of all your privileges, the most precious of which is the very altar at which you offer up the holy sacrifice. Here you have enough if you only make good use of it both to pay your own debts, and to discharge all the sacred duties of your holy calling. Ask Mary to cleanse your heart and to kindle in it a spark of that fire which consumed her own . . . let her present you to God as she once presented Him her Divine Son, Jesus.

1st Point. *Excuses for disobedience, refuted by the examples given us in connection with this mystery.* The law of the presentation did not concern Jesus, nor the law of purification Mary. Both were exempt, yet they prefer to be obedient. After this double example, what think you of the best excuses? After the examples of Jesus and Mary, let us rejoice in procuring God's glory and the edification of our neighbor.

2d Point. *How Mary complies with the law of purification.* In spite of her incomprehensible dignity, she stops in the first court of the temple, as being unworthy to pass into the second. She humbles herself before the priest, who prays for her as for other women. Oh how she teaches me to humble myself and to cleanse my heart before entering the holy of holies . . . and also the little esteem I should make of the opinion of men. . . . I am only what I am in the sight of God.

3d Point. *How Jesus is first presented, next redeemed.* Jesus offers Himself by the hands of Mary as He will later on offer Himself by the hands of His priests. In offering Himself as our head, He offered also His mystical body . . . I was present to His mind. . . . Mary redeems Jesus both for us and for herself. O Mary ! cleanse my heart, give me a spark of that fire which consumed thine own, and then present me to God as thou didst once present thine own child, Jesus.

1. Bossuet. Elevation on this mystery.

XVII. MEDITATION.

THE SAINTLY OLD SIMEON.

1st.—HE IS PREPARED FOR THE GRACE WHICH HE RECEIVES.

2d.—WHAT IS THAT GRACE?

3d.—WHAT PROFIT DOES HE DRAW FROM IT?

1st Point. *Simeon is prepared for the grace which comes to him in the temple.* The Gospel tells us "*he was just and fearing God. . . . and expecting the consolation of Israel.*" He believed in the promises concerning the Redeemer, and living by faith, he lived in justice. One thing alone he feared, to displease God; he had but one desire, to see the promised Messiah, the consolation and the salvation of Israel. Ages rolled on. So many patriarchs and prophets, who had lived in hope like himself, had died without seeing their hope realized; still he was hopeful, he was waiting, "expectans!" what was he waiting for? *Consolationem Israel.* The spirit within him detached his heart from all things of this world . . . . all his affections were for the coming Messiah.

O my soul, be thou guided by the spirit of truth and thou shalt cease to search for mere shadows, all thy desires and longings will be for Jesus alone . . . . if consolation does not come, wait with patience . . . . thou hast waited . . . wait still longer. . . "*Expecta, expecta.*"—(Is. xviii: 20.) Say with the Royal prophet: "*Expectans, exspectavi Dominum.*"—(Ps. xxxix: 2.) It may be only when life is near the end, that I will be allowed to gaze one moment like Simeon on my Lord Jesus Christ, with a glance that has in it an age of happiness. Such graces come only once, and God as a rule makes us wait a long time for them, but when they come, immense is the joy, and lasting is the effect. They last a short time, but something remains which is as it were a continuation and a renewal of the same. . . . Such was the remote preparation as far as Simeon was concerned; be-

hold now the actual or proximate preparation. "*Et venit in spiritu in templum.*" . . . Something within him bids him go to the temple immediately. He knows not, at least distinctly, what awaits him there, but he knows the call he received is from God. Let us go also to the temple, *in spiritu*, if we wish to find Jesus . . . let us never go there through custom or mere routine: "True worshipers are those who worship in spirit and in truth." Am I prompted by faith when present at religious exercises, when saying my office, when attending to my duties, when offering the dread sacrifice? If I always followed the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, what delights I would experience in my conversations with God, especially at the sacred banquet of the Eucharist!

2d Point. *What grace does he receive in the temple?* He meets the Messiah,[1] he sees Him, he acknowledges Him, he even takes Him into his arms. The same spirit which inspired Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, to go to the temple, prompts him to go too. He was looking for the Redeemer, but the Redeemer had been the first to look for old Simeon; Jesus was as eager to give Himself to Simeon as the venerable old man was to receive Him. O happy meeting of a soul with her God when after some expectation they both see, acknowledge and embrace each other. Many they were who saw Jesus during the thirty-three years He spent on earth, but those only knew Him to whom the Holy Ghost revealed Him; Simeon was one of these. O my God, grant the same favor to Thy priests! *Et ipse accepit eum in ulnas suas.* This was more than had been promised Him: *Reponsum acceperat . . . non visurum se mortem, nisi prius videret Christum Domini.* He had the promise that he would see Him. How different is the heart of God from that of man; God gives always more than he has promised, man gives far less than he promises. He takes the child Jesus in his arms: *Inter brachia sua amplexans, et ad sinum pectusque suum ardentssime et suavissime applicans.*—(Corn a Lap.) What is the reason of his confidence? His humility, his purity, his love, for all this is implied in these words: *Justus, timoratus, expectans consolationem Israel.* What is going on in his soul at this moment? No doubt the fire of Divine love devoured him, at least when he held that treasure after

1. This feast the Greeks call "the feast of the meeting." The human race represented by Simeon after waiting so many hundreds of years, goes to meet the Savior. He is found in the temple; there He is who is the source of mercy and mercy itself: Suscepimus, Deus misericordiam tuam in medio templi tui.—(Introit of the Mass.)

which he had sighed and longed for so many years. Oh with the spouse in the Scripture well might he say: *Inveni quem diligit anima mea, tenui eum, necdimittam.* But we have heard him already giving vent to his joy . . . . and you, priest of Almighty God, compare the happiness of the old man Simeon with the favor granted to you every day. Under the appearances of bread and wine do you not acknowledge the same Almighty God whom Simeon held a little infant in his arms? Are your hands less honored than his, is not your ministry as glorious? O more favored than Simeon, not only do you receive Him in your arms, but he enters into your very heart.

3d Point. *What fruit does Simeon draw from the favor granted to him?* Detachment from the goods of this world, a desire for heaven, and a burning zeal for the salvation of others, to whom he will make known the love of Jesus. His only desire had been to live long enough to see the Lord's anointed, that he might give testimony to Him; now that his prayer had been heard, there is nothing more to live for. When one has seen and tasted God, with that heavenly light which fills the soul with ineffable joy, and gives the assurance that all sins are forgiven and the prospect of an eternity of happiness—then one must be patient to live, death is such a gain!—Faithful priest, to you death would be a greater favor than even to the saintly Simeon. When he died he went to limbo; you would go to heaven. When by a fervent communion, we have received our Lord Jesus Christ, can it be hard for us to part with created things? When one has found the source, what cares he for the stream?

It is written of Simeon, that, overwhelmed with joy, and holding Jesus in his arms, he blessed Him: *Et benedixit eum.* "The blessing which we give to God," says Bossuet, "comes from the very blessing God gives us. God blesses us by pouring His favors upon us, and we bless God when, convinced that all we receive comes from Him and that we have nothing to give in return, we yet praise Him for His infinite perfections, which are the cause of our joy. The Spirit that reveals to the holy old man Simeon the hidden prerogatives of the adorable babe fills him at the same time with the desire to make Him known, and he announces his grandeur in that hymn which shall be repeated to the end of time: *Nunc dimittis.* He praises Him as the light of nations, the glory of Israel, the salvation of mankind.

The language of Simeon had surely nothing in it that was new to Mary and Joseph, yet the Evangelist tells us that both were in admiration at what he said. Oh how loving is their admiration, what an excellent way to honor the mysteries connected with the Savior. The first effect of love is to create affection for the one loved. To consider in utter abasement the wonderful charity of Christ, to lose oneself in admiration and gratitude, without a word to express it, neither interiorly nor outwardly, this indeed is the perfection of praise : *Tibi silentium laus.* O God, light of lights, may the light of faith shine brilliantly in my soul. Glory of Israel, glory of God, glory and beauty of the universe. O sweet Jesus, Thou art also my only glory, I am something only when I draw near Thee; in Thee alone, and in Thy cross, which tells me of my own worth, will I glory. In my infirmities will I also rejoice, because ; they humble me and render me less unworthy of Thy love. O salvation of all the world, be my salvation, and grant that I may zealously work for the salvation of my fellow-men.

1st Point. *Simeon is ready for the grace that comes to him in the temple.* He was just and fearing God, expecting the consolation of Israel. The Holy Spirit, who was within him, had detached his heart from created things ; he longed only for the Messiah. O my soul, be Thou directed by the same Spirit, and Thou shalt experience the same eagerness in Thy search for Jesus. This was the remote preparation, behold the proximate one. He comes to the temple, prompted by the inspiration of God. . . . Let us go to the temple to pray, not by way of routine, but with a true spirit of faith.

2d Point. What grace does he receive in the temple? He meets there the Messiah, he acknowledges Him, he takes Him in his arms. Oh the happy meeting of a soul with her God, when, after a long search, they at last embrace. Alas, how many saw Jesus Christ and knew Him not. But Simeon received even more than he had expected ; God always gives us more than we ask of Him. Simeon took the child in his arms. What made him so confident—was it not his purity, his humility and his ardent love? What was going on in his soul at that blessed moment? The same God, whom Simeon pressed to his heart, I have the good fortune of receiving every day into mine.

3d Point. *What fruit did Simeon draw from the grace granted to him in the temple.* A complete detachment from all created things, a desire for heaven, and a burning zeal for God. All that bound him to life, was the desire to see the Messiah; now that his prayer is heard, earth has nothing more that will attach him to it. For one who loves God, to live is a trial. Oh how sweet it must be to die after a fervent communion. The Holy Spirit, who has revealed to the saintly old man the grandeur of Jesus, fills Him now with the desire to make Him known to others. He praises Him as the glory of Israel, as the salvation of mankind. O Jesus, be my salvation, and grant that I may zealously work for that of my fellow-men.

XVIII. MEDITATION.

SIMEON PROPHESIES CONCERNING JESUS AND MARY.

1st.—JESUS SHALL BE THE RUIN AND THE SALVATION OF MANY.

2d.—HE SHALL MEET WITH CONTRADICTION.

3d.—MARY'S HEART WILL BE PIERCED WITH A SWORD OF SORROW.

Preludes as in Meditation XV.

1st Point. *Ecce positus est hic in ruinam . . .* etc. When the saintly old man had given vent to his own devotion in praising and publishing the glories of the child he held near to his heart, he returned Him to His parents. These were surely transported with joy at what they had heard; but alas, the purest of joys in this world are of very short duration. How the last words of the prophet must have broken their hearts! It was to Mary, to her motherly heart, that he spoke and said: *Dixit ad Mariam matrem ejus.* "That Son of yours, whom you love so fondly, that God made man to redeem mankind, alas, He will not save all; many shall be scandalized in Him, He will be the

occasion of ruin for many!" How is the Savior of human souls to be the occasion of ruin for many, *multorum?* Sad consequence of the perversity of man! It had been predicted: "*Erit Dominus in laqueum et in ruinam habitantibus Jerusalem; et offendent ex eis plurimi, et cadent, et conterentur.*"—(Isaias viii: 14,15.) In the days of Saint Paul, these words of the prophet had already their accomplishment and they have it even in our own days: "*Offenderunt in lapidem offensionis, sicut scriptum est: Ecce pono in Sion lapsidem offensionis et petram scandali.*"—(Rom. IX: 32, 33.) The Jews never consented to acknowledge the Messiah: His own received Him not. By refusing the light and the salvation offered them, they have become more guilty and wretched. It is then true to say that Jesus has been the ruin; but of whom? He was the ruin of these wilfully blind people, of these ungrateful and jealous scribes and Pharisees, who persisted in doing evil, because He was good; of these people who would not admit His miracles, or found fault with his good deeds, the virtue that came from Him, and the people who ran after Him. The infinite mercy of God condemns those whom it does not justify.

O sweet Jesus, to how many Christians, to how many priests, art Thou not even now an occasion of ruin! Thou art expecting, Thou urgest them to come to Thee. Alas! because Thou art so good, they are so sinful. They render void all Thou hast done for their own happiness. They trample under foot Thy precious blood, and in spite of Thee Thou must keep away from them and doom them to eternal torments, after purchasing for them eternal joys. "*Omnis qui ceciderit super illum lapidem, conquassabitur; super quem autem ceciderit, comminuet illum.*"—(LUC. XX: 18.)

2d Point. *Et in signum cui contradicetur.* These words explain the preceding sentence: Why does not the Redeemer save all those to whom salvation is offered? Why does He not raise all the just ones on earth to a sublime perfection and to eternal glory in heaven? Because he is contradicted: He was contradicted during all His life, in every way and by all kinds of people, and it is so even in our days. His miracles, His teaching, His benignity, His meekness . . . . all in Him met, and meets even now with contradiction and opposition. What cruel mockery did He not experience on Calvary at the hands of sinners? But these at least did not know him: *Si enim cognovissent, nunquam*

Dominum gloriæ crucifixissent."—(I. Cor. II : 18.) He was able to say to His Father : "*Forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" But how painful it must be for Him to be contradicted, even by those He hath enlightened, and to whom He has given charge of others. . . . To be fond of praise, to despise humiliation, to look for comfort and ease, to refuse the cross and not to deny oneself . . . . all this to contradict Jesus Christ, and to wage war against Him. And did I not often do all that? My words were for God, my conduct and life opposed to Him; I have been a contradiction to the teaching and example of Jesus Christ. "The Jews," says Bossuet, "who insulted Him so sacrilegiously on the cross, when He extended his His hands to them, were simply contradicting Him." Alas, if He could now, glorious and immortal as He is, experience sorrow, that sorrow would come to Him more from His priests than from all others ; for behold now the greatest of contradictions ; we that have been chosen as the instruments of His mercy unto men, we are ourselves an obstacle in the way of that mercy : "*Qui alium doces, teipsum non doces ; qui prædicas non furandum furaris . . ; nomen Dei per vos blasphematur inter gentes.*"—(Rom. II : 21, 24.) People cannot believe that the doctrine comes from God, when they see that those who preach it, care so little about practicing it. I see now, O Jesus, I am Thy adversary, for I am always contradicting Thee ; and if I am not with Thee now, what will I find, when I am at the end of my journey, except a terrible judgment and eternal reprobation.[1] O my God, I beseech Thee, cleanse my heart of that spirit of contradiction, which made me so often oppose Thy holy will.

3d Point. *Et tuam ipsius animam pertransitit gladius.* To see her beloved Jesus contradicted, was surely a torment for the heart of Mary. Her martyrdom was already commenced. Before Simeon had spoken to her, she knew that in becoming the mother of Christ, she was to undergo great tribulations ; but on this day she felt the sword pierce her heart ; when presenting Jesus as our victim, she, as it were, ratified the sentence of His condemnation. In the garden of Olives, Jesus was terrified at the sight of death, though He knew beforehand it was to come, because He then and there had to give His consent and

1. Esto consentiens adversario tuo cito dum es in via cum eo : ne forte tradat te adversarius judici, et judex tradat te ministro, et in carcerem mittaris. Amen, dico tibi, non exies inde, donec reddas novissimum qaudrantem.—(Mat. v: 25, 26.)

to satisfy the sentence of His eternal Father: *Non mea voluntas: sed tua, fiat.* In the same manner, Mary suffered more intensely in the temple on account of the sorrows that were to come upon her beloved Jesus, because there she had to give Him up to the justice of God and the cruelty of men. From that day forth, she experienced in her soul an agony not unlike the agony of her Son. Her desire for the salvation of man, struggled within her with that unspeakable love she felt for Jesus; and that struggle was most cruel to her. O blessed Mary, how thou hast wept for us! what mortal agony thou hast experienced for our sake! How dare we invoke thee, after having caused thee so many torments? But in spite of our sins thou continuest to love us, because we are the beloved of Jesus. Be, therefore, always our protectress and our mother, with Thy divine Son. Grant that we never more may afflict Him, but that we may follow Him with thee to the foot of the cross, a glimpse of which Thou sawest on the day of the presentation in the temple.

1st Point. *Jesus is set for the ruin of many.* The Redeemer of mankind is the occasion of the ruin, not of a few, but of many! Oh sad mystery of the perversity of man! Those that the infinite mercy of God does not render just, those it condemns. O my Jesus, for how many, even now, Thou art a stumbling stone! Because Thou art so good, they are so sinful.

2d Point. *Jesus shall be contradicted.* He was contradicted all His life and by all kinds of people . . . . as it has been, so it is now even in our days. The miracles of Jesus, His teaching, His meekness . . . . everything in Him was contradicted. What horrible contradiction took place on Calvary! There His contradictors knew Him not. . . . . To be fond of praise, to despise humiliation, to refuse to deny oneself, or to carry one's cross, this is to contradict Jesus Christ. Have I not been guilty of doing all this?

3d Point. *A sword of sorrow will run through Mary's heart.* The martyrdom of the virgin mother had already begun. She knew how dearly she was to pay for the honor of being the mother of God. But on this day the revelation made to her, adds a new sorrow to the

one already experienced. By presenting Jesus in the temple, she gave Him up to the justice of the Father, and to the cruelty of men . . . O holy Mary, how much thou hast wept, how much thou hast suffered for our sakes.

PROPER OF THE SAINTS.

XIX. MEDITATION.

NOVEMBER 30—ST. ANDREW.

1st.—HIS LOVE FOR THE CROSS.

2d.—THE REASON OF HIS INTENSE LOVE.

3d.—WONDERFUL EFFECTS OF THIS LOVE IN HIM.

1st Point. *The love St. Andrew bore the cross.* The Savior was one day walking on the shore of the sea of Galilee, when he saw the two brothers, Peter and Andrew. He bade them come and follow Him: *Venite post me.* By these words he called them to carry the cross after Him; Peter lovingly submitted, but Andrew grasped it eagerly.

After a life of hardships and suffering of all kinds, spent amongst the barbarians of Scythia and Thracia, he thought that he had not yet endured enough for his Master. In fact, he never was satisfied till the day came on which he ended his life on the cross. It was at Patras in Achaia, that he encountered that death for which he so much longed. There never was a man, however fond of pleasures you may suppose him, that ever craved for them as St. Andrew craved for tortures. He is worn out, both by labor and old age, yet he runs with joy to the place of execution . . . . when he sees the cross his heart is, as it were, enlarged; he bows to it, he blesses it, he embraces it. *O bona crux*, he exclaims; O lovely cross, thou art to me not an instrument of torture but of joy, and how I have longed for thee! *Diu desiderata.* To behold thee is to love thee: *Sollicite amata;* thee have I sought all

the days of my life: *Sine intermissione quæsita* . . . . . now that I hold thee in my possession, I wish for nothing more: *Et aliquando cupienti animo præparata!* In the holy transport of his love, he desires the cross itself to leap for joy, so that both might rejoice together: *Ita ut et tu exultans suscipias me.* What, says St. Bernard, was the love within him able to set in motion the wood of the cross? "*Ergone tanta est exultatio, ut exultet et ipsa crux?*"—(Sermon on the vigil of Saint Andrew.) Behold him on the gibbet, hanging from the cross; for two whole days he spoke from the cross to the multitude, who were in admiration at what he said and at the happiness he seemed to enjoy. From his cross, he preaches the cross, and exhorts people to cherish it. One moment, however, a cloud passed over his countenance; he appeared to be sorrowing. They heard him complain, but of what? Ah, they were going to take him down from his beloved cross. The judge, moved by the cries of the multitude, is about to suspend the sentence; but the holy martyr beseeches him not to be so cruelly kind to him, and when the people offer to deliver him, he raises at once his voice to heaven: "O God," he says, "I give myself up to Thee, but grant me a favor: the only one I ask is that I may die on this cross. O Lord, grant that I be never taken from it, I care not for a life which I have already given to Thee:" *Tantum modo in hac voce exaudi me: ne me permittas ab impio judice deponi.* O how sublime his courage, how persevering his love for the cross! Behold now, such has been at all times, in a more or less intensity, the love good priests have shown before the people for the cross. Have I given the example of such a love? I have, as they, the same high office, but have I loved sufferings?

2d Point. *The reasons of the intense love of Saint Andrew.* These reasons Saint Andrew will tell us himself. He loved the cross for three reasons, all of which filled his soul with transports of joy. It was dear to Jesus Christ, it was a precious treasure to the saint himself, and, finally, the cross led to glory.

I. The apostles, more than once, wondered at the love the Savior had for sufferings. He often spoke of them, even on the occasion of His glorious transfiguration on Mount Thabor, and at such moments His words were uttered with fire and enthusiasm: "*Desiderio desideravi hoc Pascha manducare vobiscum.*" Why is He so eager to eat the Pasch now more than at any other time? Because His passion is to

come immediately thereafter: "*Antequam patiar.*" To Him sufferings were as a refreshing bath for which He sighed, because by them the world was to be redeemed: "*Baptismo habeo baptizari, et quomodo coarctor usque dum perficiatur!*" Speaking of the day of His death, the Holy Ghost called it the day of His espousals, because when dying He was to take the Church for His bride: "*In die desponsationis illius, it in die lætitiæ cordis ejus.*"—(Cant. iii: 11.)

Saint Andrew loved the cross because he loved Jesus Christ. O cross on which were supported the bleeding limbs of my Redeemer! How glorious thou art in my eyes: *O bona crux, quæ decorem et pulchritudinem de membris Domini suscepisti!* Through thee my death will be somewhat like to His. I come to thee, welcome me; I am entitled to the honor I now claim, for I am the disciple of Him who died in thy embrace: *Suscipe discipulum Christi.*

II. The value of the cross was enhanced in the eyes of the apostle by the many treasures that flow from it. It was by the cross that grace came into this world, and when any one is laid upon it, he may expect all spiritual help and strength to conquer all. Precious cross, *crux pretiosa!* In thee is all my hope, with thee nothing is impossible to me; thou woundest in order to heal, thou humblest in order to exalt: to die by thee is to secure eternal life . . . . for this reason I have long cherished thee, I have so long pined after thee: *Amator tuus semper fui et desideravi amplecti te.*

III. Finally, the apostle St. Andrew knows that the end of the cross is glory; it will open to him the gates of heaven. . . . . To carry one's cross with patience is the sign of predestination. To be despised, to suffer and die for Christ, and after His example, is the surest way to the kingdom of God. O holy cross, by thee I will go to Him who redeemed me through thee: *Per te me recipiat qui per te moriens me redemit.*

When we consider the cross in the same threefold light, to us the cross ought to be as dear as it was to St. Andrew. Jesus is as much our model as He was his; we are in need of the same grace, and the cross is its true channel; we expect the same happiness, and the cross is what leads to it. . . . But alas, do we love the cross? Even among priests, among the ministers of the crucified are there not many of whom it might be said with St. Paul to the Philippians: "*Multi*

ambulant, quos sæpe dicebam vobis, nunc autem et flens dico, inimicos crucis Christi ?"—(Phillip. iii : 18.)

3d Point. *Wonderful effects of this love in him.* And first, as for himself, the intensity of his love changed into joy the sufferings of his martyrdom. Strange indeed! At the thought of His passion, Jesus is seized with fear, and beseeches His Father to take away the chalice from His lips, while St. Andrew, when they propose to put an end to his torments, is heard to exclaim : "O Lord," he said, "do not permit such a course : *ne permittas.*" O how condescending is the charity of God. To comfort the weak He takes upon Himself our infirmity, in order to glorify His martyrs He communicates to them His own strength.

How many pure and solid consolations would I have experienced if I had lovingly carried my cross, instead of dragging it unwillingly after me. Yes, my Lord ; I must confess, such would have been my experience, and it was through my own fault that it has not always been in my case ; one who loves Thee is never alone in his sufferings : "*Cum ipso sum in tribulatione.*" . . . From the cross come to us all heavenly favors : "*In cruce infusio supernæ suavitatis.*"—(Imit.) From the cross flow both the strength of the soul and the joy of the mind : "*In cruce robur mentis, in cruce gaudium spiritus.*"—(Ibid.) There is one thing which the truly apostolic priest wishes for, with more eagerness than for sensible consolations, and that is the salvation of souls. St. Andrew stretched on the cross, works wonderful conversions. Thousands of infidels abjure error and believe in the Gospel ; the very brother of the proconsul bows to Jesus Christ, and from the city of Patras, where he suffered, the light spread rapidly to the neighboring country ; and amongst the growing congregations of that time, the Church of Achaia shines in a special manner, not only by the number, but by the fervor of its members. . . . Such are the fruits produced in us by the love of the cross. O my God, grant such a love to each of Thy priests ; and you, blessed St. Andrew, ask it of God for us. After your example, we will then walk in the way of true sanctity, we will point out the way to others ; and after the light tribulations of this world, which the grace of God will enable us to endure, we will, finally, with a great many of our fellow-men, enter into the sweet possession of the joys of life everlasting.

1st Point. *The love St. Andrew had for the cross.* At Patras the saint was sentenced to the same torture as the Divine Master. This had been the object of his ardent desire. At the sight of the cross his heart is, as it were, enlarged. . . . He bows with reverence before the instrument of his torture, he utters only blessings upon it, he embraces it; to him the cross is the sum of all happiness. *O bona crux!* For two days from his cross he addresses the multitude who flock around him and are in admiration . . . they grow not tired of listening to him, he appears so happy . . . only one thing causes him to complain . . . his fear is that they will not allow him to complete the sacrifice of his life on the cross . . . the saints have yearned after sufferings, and I have made it always a point to avoid them.

2d Point. *What are the reasons of his love for the cross?* The cross he held to be dear to our Lord, it was to him a precious treasure, and the end was to be eternal glory. The cross supported the sacred limbs of the dying Savior; this was enough to enhance its price in the eyes of His disciple . . . he knows besides that the cross contains all he can wish for . . . finally, he raised his eyes to heaven, the gates of which the cross was to open to him. Indeed, St. Paul was right, when he shed tears at the thought that amongst the disciples there were some who were the enemies of the cross.

3d Point. *Wonderful fruits which St. Andrew's love for sufferings produced in him.* That love of his changed his tortures into joy. Upon their going to relieve him, he is heard to mourn and complain, saying: "O Lord, permit it not." How many sad hours would I have spared myself if I had cheerfully taken up my cross instead of dragging it unwillingly after me. The success of the apostle was the reward of his love for sufferings. Why is it that I have no success?

XX. MEDITATION.

SAME SUBJECT—SAINT ANDREW ON THE CROSS—THE PRIEST'S MODEL IN THE PULPIT AND AT THE ALTAR.

This meditation, which is substantially taken from the panegyric of Saint Andrew by Bourdaloue, should tend to direct priests in the discharge of the two principal obligations of the priesthood, namely, the preaching of the word of God and the offering up of the Divine sacrifice: "*Sacerdotem oportet offerre . . . . prædicare.*"—(Pontif.)

1st.—ST. ANDREW ON THE CROSS A MODEL TO THE PREACHER.

2d.—ST. ANDREW ON THE CROSS A MODEL TO THE PRIEST AT THE ALTAR.

1st Point. *The cross is the pulpit from which the apostle best exercised the preacher's function.* To preach with authority and carry conviction to the hearers, should be the noble aim of him who is appointed to preach. And it was upon the cross that the apostle best discharged the duty of this office.

I. The apostles received, and every priest receives, as a special mission, that of preaching God crucified, making known to their fellowmen the mystery of the cross, of announcing it as their only hope, and the infallible means of salvation: "*Nos autem prædicamus Christum crucifixum.*"—(I. Cor. 1 : 23.) Saint Andrew never preached better than when on his cross; then, indeed, *Crucifixus crucifixum prædicabat.* To carry the cross is an obligation, and a strict one it is of the evangelical law; but this great truth has not the same efficacy in the mouth of all those who preach it. People like to be told of their duties by one who himself is attached to duty; they are shocked when one who leads a life of comfort comes to speak to them of a penitent and mortified life . . . . Saint Andrew spoke of the cross, but he him-

self was on the cross. This fact gave strength to his words, a strength which carried conviction to his hearers, who were conquered by his example.

II. If a preacher desires to touch the hearts of his hearers, says St. Bernard, his actions must speak louder than his voice, for the voice of action is the only thing that will move men's minds, and subdue their hearts. Show by your conduct that you are fully convinced of what you say, and you will then be able to convince others : *Dabis voci tuæ vocem virtutis, si, quod mihi suades, prius tibi videaris persuasisse.* By this means it was that St. Andrew dispelled the errors of the pagans who surrounded him. By his own example he convinced them. There was not one amongst his hearers but could say to himself : "If this man was not truly convinced, could he speak, could he act, and could he suffer in that way?" From what people saw and heard, the conclusion was easy, there was something more than human in the man ; God alone could thus inspire a man to love sufferings, which the nature of man, left to itself, was not able to undergo.

III. Who will now be surprised if the preaching of the apostle was a success, a wonderful success? Of the thousands that surrounded the cross of St. Andrew, there was scarcely one who, by the grace of God and the strength of such an example, did not renounce idolatry to profess the law of Jesus Christ; and these thousands of neophytes began immediately to lead lives of the strictest Christian perfection. How can you explain such a sudden and miraculous transformation? It was the effect of the preaching of Christ crucified, by a disciple crucified as was his Master. Behold, says St. Jerome, what the Gospel can do, when preached by a man who knows how to suffer and die for his Master. What, then, must preachers do if they wish that the word spoken by them may bring forth fruit? They must carry in their body the mortification of Jesus Christ : "*Semper mortificationem Jesu in corpore nostro circumferentes.*"—(II. Cor. iv : 10.) The life of Christ, if it be manifest in the preacher, must through him be communicated to his hearers : "*Ut et vita Jesu manifestetur in corporibus nostris.*"—(Ibid.) Is it thus, O my God, that I have been mindful of the honor of having been chosen as Thy interpreter and ambassador?

2d Point. *The cross, the altar on which St. Andrew most worthily offered the holy sacrifice.* The sacrifice of the altar is to the priest a

glorious privilege and the source of all blessings, but in offering the body and blood of Christ he must also offer himself; he must be a victim himself as well as the one immolated for all mankind. On the altar, as well as on the cross, Jesus offers Himself whole and entire to His Father; He offers His mystical body, of which the priests are the chief members, as well as His natural body. Hence the words of St. Paul, who thought himself bound to fill up in his own body the things that were wanting of the sufferings of Christ: "*Adimpleo ea quæ desunt passionum Christi in carne mea.*"—(Col. i: 24.) The sacrifice of Christ is completed by our own. To offer up Jesus Christ and to offer himself with Him, behold the part of the true priest.

St. Andrew, in himself, gives us this double example. He never failed to offer the immolated Lamb of God, and at the end of his life he offered himself on the altar of the cross. When the proconsul commanded him to burn incense before idols that he might save his life, the saint gave him this noble answer: *Ego omnipotenti Deo immolo quotidie, non taurorum carnes, sed agnum immaculatum.* But the sacrifice of the altar was not enough for him. After discharging his duty as a priest at the altar, he went as far as to sacrifice himself, and this is the perfection of sacrifice. At first he began his sacrifice by becoming a disciple and an apostle of Jesus Christ; he continued it by spending himself generously in the service of his Master, and finally he crowned all by giving up his life for Him on the cross.

Let us follow his example as far as we are able. Let us offer up Jesus Christ, and let us offer ourselves up with Him. Let us consider it a great misfortune when, through our own fault, we are hindered once from ascending the holy altar. It is the desire of heaven and earth and also of the suffering souls in purgatory, that we offer the adorable sacrifice; for the sake of His own glory, God desires it; the angels and saints rejoice, and the Church on earth derives precious benefits therefrom, while we ourselves may hope for every blessing by offering it: "*Quando sacerdos celebrat, Deum honorat, angelos lætificat, ecclesiam ædificat, vivos adjuvat, defunctis requiem præstat, et sese omnium bonorum participem efficit.*"—(Imit. l. iv. c. v.) But let us not separate what, of necessity, must go together. Our sufferings, our humiliations, that long protracted death, (for what else is the hardship of our ministry?) let us unite all these with the sufferings and death of

Jesus Christ. Let us say to the Master in the words of Saint Paul: "*Propter te mortificamur tota die; æstimati sumus sicut oves occisionis.*"—(Rom. viii: 36.)

Yes, my Lord; I kiss the cross, since I see it is through the cross alone that I can worthily discharge the noblest of the duties of my calling. Long enough have I sacrificed Thee alone at the altar: hereafter I will sacrifice myself also. Thou are my victim, I will be Thine, and since Thou offerest Thyself for me continually, I will also continually offer myself as a victim to Thy glory: "*Introibo in domum tuam in holocaustis.—Quid est holocaustum? Totum incensum, sed igne divino. . . . Totum meum consumat ignis tuus; nihil mei remaneat mihi; tòtum sit tibi.*"—(St. Aug.)

1st Point. *The cross, the pulpit from which St. Andrew preached best.* The first duty of the priest and of the apostle as well, is to preach a crucified God, and a priest never preaches better than when he is himself, as it were, crucified: *Crucifixus crucifixum prædicabat.* Let us show by our actions that we ourselves are convinced, and then we will be able to convince others: *Dabis voci tuæ vocem virtutis, si quod mihi suades, prius tibi videaris persuasisse.* What, then, must the priest do, who wishes to move his hearers? Carry in his flesh the mortification of Christ: *Semper mortificationem Jesu in corpore nostro circumferentes.*"

2d Point. *The cross, the altar on which St. Andrew most fittingly offered the holy sacrifice.* The holy Mass is for the priest a glorious privilege and the source of all happiness, if, in offering the Divine victim, he forgets not to offer himself at the same time. Thus it was that St. Paul thought himself bound to fill up in his flesh what was wanting of the sufferings of Christ. To offer the Son of God and at the same time to offer himself, is the part of the true priest. Such may be said of St. Andrew; can the same be said of me?

XXI. MEDITATION.

SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER.

Speaking of St. Francis, a certain writer has said : *Totus erat Dei, totus proximi, totus sui.* In these few words, we have the best eulogium that can be made of a priest or a pastor.

1st.—SAINT FRANCIS ALL FOR GOD ; THAT IS, FOR HIS GLORY.

2d.—SAINT FRANCIS ALL FOR HIS NEIGHBOR ; THAT IS, FOR HIS SANCTIFICATION.

3d.—SAINT FRANCIS ALL FOR HIMSELF ; THAT IS, FOR HIS OWN PERFECTION.

1st Point. *St. Francis all for God and His glory. Totus erat Dei.* By these words we mean that he was all for God since the day of his conversion ; for he wept bitterly over the years spent in forgetfulness of his God, the years that preceded the day on which this well known maxim of the Gospel reached his ears : *Quid prodest.* A retreat, which he then made under the direction of St. Ignatius, put an end to all his illusions ; and no sooner did he learn that all was vanity except God, than he no longer felt but one great desire, to love God and bring about others to do the same. O how courageous he was to banish from his heart all that breathed not of the love of God. He goes forth begging from door to door, he who had always been so sensitive to worldly honor ; see him in hospitals caring for people attacked with loathsome diseases, he who was once so proud and so zealous of public esteem. Again what a sacrifice when he left his native country to which he never after was to return, and, passing near by his home, he stopped not even to bid his mother farewell !

One so dead to this world was surely well prepared to love God; yes, and that love consumed him. His countenance was often seen to be red as fire, tears ran from his eyes, and he breathed burning words, which were as so many sparks of the fire within him. "O most holy Trinity, O my Jesus, O my love!" He would have been willing to lay down his life rather than see God offended. "Life is a burden to me," he once wrote to a friend; "rather die a thousand times than see God so outraged, and I not able to prevent it or to make amends for it." What did he not undergo to carry to the most distant countries the knowledge and the love of God? Often he had wished to convert the world . . . and yet, after many hardships, after having spent himself again and again, he thought he had done nothing. During his meditation he was heard to sigh heavily and to utter words like these: *Quis mihi det ut moriar pro te, ut cognoscant te omnes fines terræ?* And a short time before his death, he said he was resolved, after converting the vast empire of China, to go amongst the Tartars, then back to Europe, and wage war against the heretics and their lewd morals; he would afterward cross over to Africa, and at last return to Asia to conquer other nations to Christ. See what zeal will do when prompted by love: "*Magna res est amor, magnum omnino bonum . . , ad magna operanda impellit, et ad desideranda semper perfectiora excitat . . . Amans volat, currit et lætatur. . . . Amor modum sæpe nescit; sed super omnem modum fervescit. . . . De impossibilitate non causatur, quia cuncta sibi posse et licere arbitratur.*"—(Imit.)

If such is true love, what kind of love is mine? One painful reflection I must make. Francis died at the age of forty-six. In ten years he did wonders for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Alas, I have been a priest for many years, and what have I done for God and my fellow-men? And yet, O my soul, the choice must be taken; either to glorify God in this life by loving Him and making Him be loved by others, or throughout all eternity be cast away from Him. O my God, I will be Thine and wholly Thine. What has hindered me thus far from loving Thee? Was it myself? If so, I will conquer myself. Was it the devil? I will hereafter resist him. Was it the world and the esteem of the world? I will despise both more than ever in the past.

2d Point. *St. Francis was all for his neighbor; he always aimed at the sanctification of his neighbor: Totus erat proximi.* His charity

comprised everything in its sweet embrace, the body as well as the soul, time and eternity. He seemed to have been born for the relief of the sufferings of others; to help others was his greatest delight. But he showed his love for his neighbor in a special manner by devoting himself to their salvation. It might be said of him what Saint Chrysostom said of Saint Paul, that his zeal gave him wings to fly almost to the extremities of the earth in order to conquer souls to God. . . . *Quasi pennatus totum peragravit orbem.* When we stop to reckon up all his travels by land and sea, and think of the limited means of transportation in those days, we stand amazed at his having been able to visit so many different countries in so short a time; and yet we know that he preached, baptized and administered the sacraments in all these places; we know that everywhere he went he rooted out idolatry, reformed the morals of the people, and planted Christian faith and charity.

To tear from the devil's grasp and give to heaven immortal souls created in the image and likeness of God, and redeemed by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, was his only food, his only support, in a word, his whole life. With such a noble aim in view, he looked upon labor as repose, while to suffer was to him a pleasure. Dangers and hardships, far from frightening him, never failed to increase his courage. Were he ever asked to give up the idea of converting the inhabitants of a savage island, the very picture of its degradation would inspire him with an ardent desire of its religious conquest. To all arguments he would answer that if that island had been teeming with gold, more than one greedy trader would have long since visited it, and with a feeling of indignation he would add: Will I not do for the sake of souls what others do for gold and silver? "The greatest danger is to lack confidence in God, even in the most trying circumstances." Have I had such love for my neighbor? Both for his temporal and eternal welfare, what compassion have I shown him in his sufferings?

3d Point. *Francis all for himself; that is, he always aimed at his own perfection: Totus erat sui.* One of the dangers most common with missionary priests and pastors is, that, forgetful of themselves, they become almost totally absorbed in exterior occupations. Our Lord made this reproach to the bishop of Ephesus: "*Scio opera tua, et laborem, et patientiam tuam, et quia non potes sustinere malos.*" Thus a priest may be zealous, he may work earnestly and not spare himself, but if he

neglect to strengthen his soul by prayer, he will soon lose all his power.[1] After some time a kind of lukewarm piety takes the place of charity : "*Sed habeo adversum tę, quod charitatem tuam primam reliquisti.*" This danger Francis never knew. There never was a priest who worked for his own sanctification with more care than he, whilst working for the sanctification of others. He had his appointed time to commune with God, and then he forgot his neighbor for the very sake of his neighbor. When he was in God, he used to go up into the church-tower so that no one might disturb him during his two hours' meditation. While traveling he used to pray from midnight to sunrise. He neglected none of the devotional exercises practiced by good priests, viz.: examination of conscience, visits to the blessed sacrament, spiritual retreat, etc. And whilst living in continual union with his God, he was always ready to do anything that the mercy of God would suggest for the good of souls. Such a life of action blended with holy contemplation I admire in all truly apostolic men ; but do I practice it myself ?

O Francis, zeal is not extinguished in heaven. Zeal is only the effect of love, and zeal must be even more burning where love is made perfect, that is, in heaven. We beseech you, then, by the zeal you had on earth, by that double love of God and of man, to cast your eyes on those who are priests as you were. The glory of God and the salvation of mankind is intrusted to them; ask of God that they may understand it well, and that they may be able to do all they are intended to do; ask that they may be as yourself, all for God, all for their neighbor, and all for themselves.

1st Point. *Francis all for God.* Since the day the evangelical saying, "*Quid prodest,*" flashed on his mind, he has learned the vanity of all created things. He has but one desire, to love God and conquer souls. How courageous he is in doing away with everything which in him might be a hindrance to the Divine plan ; how much he endures for the sake of carrying the good tidings of the true faith to far-off nations. In ten years he realized his immense projects ; and I have been a priest for so many years, and what have I done for God ?

1. Aruit cor meum, quia oblitus sum comedere panem meum.—(Ps. ci : 5.)

2d Point. *Francis all to his neighbor.* His charity knew no limits; it embraced the body, but it extended far more to the soul; what burning zeal for their salvation: *Quasi pennatus totum peragravit orbem.* To snatch from the devil and give to Almighty God as many souls as possible, is his only ambition; to this end he surmounts everything; dangers are only new encouragement for him.

3d Point. *Francis all to himself.* That is, to his own sanctification. He avoids a danger very common with apostolic men, namely, to forget ourselves whilst working for others. He has his time appointed to commune with God, and then he forgets his neighbor; it is his own hour. In his journeys he prayed, as a rule, from midnight to the rising of the sun. O my God, what a condemnation of my conduct is the example of St. Francis Xavier.

XXII. MEDITATION.

SAME SUBJECT AS THE PRECEDING MEDITATION, ON THESE WORDS:

Satis est, Domine, satis est.

The apostle of the Indies and Japan has left us a complete picture of himself in these words, which tell us eloquently—

1st.—OF HIS LOVE FOR GOD.

2d.—OF HIS ZEAL FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS.

3d.—OF HIS PROFOUND HUMILITY CONCERNING HIMSELF.

1st Point. *Satis est, Domine, satis est; his love for God.* We see in these words how habitual, how strong, how pure, and how disinterested was his love for God.

I. A soul whose charity is not strong is easily distracted or taken up by sensible things, even at the time of prayer and meditation. Once through with praying, she eagerly plunges into occupations purely exterior, and loses nearly all thought about things of God. But it is not so with a soul firmly attached to Almighty God; she never parts

with God save with reluctance. Francis found and rejoiced in God everywhere, because God owned every affection of his heart. In the ordinary transactions of life, as well as in solitude, amongst crowds of infidels or catechumens who called on him, he always carried heaven with him, because he always was united to God. When he was most taken up with the duties of his ministry, very often he was heard to give vent to the feeling of his heart overwhelmed with joy and consolation ; *Satis est, Domine, satis est.* When at his duty one would think that he was all taken up with it, but he was at the same time conversing with God, and in such a way that one would think that he was doing nothing else.

II. Pure and disinterested love. "*Deus meus et omnia. Quid nihi, est in cœlo, et a te quid volui super terrum ?*" This is the love saints have for God, and such was the love of St. Francis. God was the object of all his wishes. Spiritual favors granted to him were, as it were, a burden to the saint . . . . it was a torment to him not to suffer, and also to experience such consolation in the discharge of his duties. His desire was to serve the good Master for the love he had for Him, more than on account of himself. "Enough, O my Lord, enough. I fear lest the sweetness of Thy service diminish the purity of my love, and that by many favors I may come to love Thee less, who art the giver :" "*Hæc pura et defœcata intentatio voluntatis,*" says St. Bernard, "*Quæ nihil habet de proprio, sed totum divinum ; sic affici deificari est.*"—(De Amore Dei.) But oh, how few they are whose love is so disinterested. The apostle has said : "*Omnes quæ sua sunt quærunt ?*" Dost Thou find at least, my God, such love sometimes in the hearts of Thy priests? Many, perhaps, there are to whom Thou couldst say as Thou didst to the priests of the old dispensation : "*Quis est in vobis, qui claudat ostia, et incendat altare meum gratuito.*"—(Mal. i : 10.) I know we are commanded to hope as well as to love, and the thought of the reward has been a great incentive to the most faithful in keeping the law : "*Inclinavi cor meum ad faciendas justificationes tuas in æternum propter retributionem.*" I will do so, my God, for I am weak and cannot love Thee in a truly disinterested manner ; yet with the help of Thy holy grace, I will produce acts of disinterested love as frequently as possible.

2d Point. *Satis est, Domine, satis est : zeal of the saint for the*

salvation of others. These words show the generosity of his love for his neighbor's salvation? yet that love was discreet and patient.

I. Generosity of his love. His heart is overwhelmed with happiness; he enjoys, as it were, the bliss of heaven whilst yet on earth; but he considers so many souls around him, who know not God and are going to perdition, and these he wishes to save. He is afraid that if he stops to enjoy his own happiness, he may become some day insensible when others are concerned. He must not lose even one minute that may be employed in saving these souls; to instruct them and save them, he will part with everything and everyone, even with his God. And how pleasing is such zeal to Almighty God, like Aaron of old, leaving the tabernacle to go with censer in his hands to the dying and the dead; to propitiate the justice of heaven in favor of the children of Israel. This is not, however, to part with God; it is rather to forget self and make place for God.

II. Discreet love. True zeal must, of necessity, be discreet. To know how far to go and when to stop, is not the conduct of him who has but an ordinary virtue; "*Magnæ virtutis est cum felicitate luctari; magnæ felicitatis a felicitate non vinci.*"—(St. Augustine.) Priests there are, who have left the care of souls because they liked a life of retirement; others were carried away too far by imprudent zeal. There is a double danger to be avoided: the one to do more, the other to do less than God has appointed we should do. Francis knew full well he must moderate his zeal, or else he would not do so much good. "Enough, O Lord, enough. Thou demandest of me to be prudent, and I will be prudent;" but the patience and the longing of the saint for suffering is revealed to us yet more clearly in those words.

III. One must be fond of sufferings, if he wishes to go safely through the many trials that must come to every apostolic laborer. Saint Francis was fond of sufferings, he thirsted after them. So he was heard lovingly to complain: "It is enough, O Lord, it is enough; why grant so many and so sweet consolations to one who desires only to suffer for Thee and for his fellow-men? By the cross, these souls so dear to Thee are to be saved. Allow me, then, to join my poor sufferings with those of the Son of God for my brethren." His passionate love for the cross he manifested in another circumstance. When he

was about to start for the Indies, God made known to him how much of tribulation was in store for him, in connection with the salvation of his fellow-men, and the saint said: "Still more, O my God, more of tribulations. I welcome with joy the storms and the shipwrecks, privations and sufferings and trials as Thou promisest: *Amplius, Domine, amplius;* only give me more of them." This is heroism in priestly zeal. Can I show any sign of such zeal. If the chalice of sufferings is brought to me, do not I complain of its bitterness; scarcely have I tasted that I say, enough, O Lord. Were it a question of sensible consolation, oh then I would willingly say: "Give me more, O Lord . . . . more."

3d Point. *Satis est, Domine, satis est; profound humility of St. Francis.* St. Francis trusts not himself, he has nothing but contempt for his own person, and his desire is to be despised by all; these are the three marks of true humility, and the words of our text show that they are to be found in our saint.

I. The saints would like, if it were in their power, to render to Almighty God as much as they receive from Him, and this would be fair and just. But being well acquainted with their own frailty, and knowing that great favors from above must be corresponded to with great fidelity, they dread not to make a sufficient return, and, therefore, they beg of God either to enlarge their hearts to receive His graces, or to lessen the number of these graces, for fear any be lost. "It is enough, O Lord, it is enough; full is my heart. Grant that I never lose the least of the favors poured on my soul. Rather receive less, than be exposed not to profit by what Thou grantest." How pleasing such prayer is to Almighty God! How the saints acknowledge God's liberality and the excellency of His gifts.

II. Francis not only mistrusts himself, he goes further yet; he despises himself, and his only fear is the esteem of others. This has been noticed in him all his life time, since the day of his conversion. In many of his letters he calls himself a very wicked man, the greatest of sinners, and he asks his brethren to pray for him. "For my own sake," he one day wrote to a friend, "I must tell in what anguish I am; as God knows the number of my sins and their enormity, I am afraid that on this account our works will prove a failure." The miracles he performed were due, he said, to the innocence of the children through whom he wrought them, or the lively faith of the applicants.

III. The least mark of reverence caused him to blush. When he prayed to God not to lavish so many favors on him—*Satis est Domine, satis est*—he protested that he was unworthy, and feared lest people might be led to pay respect to one whom all should despise.

O my God, if humility is compatible with the possession of that which most excites the admiration of men, such as extraordinary graces, this power of working miracles, etc., how much more easy should its practice be to one who must acknowledge to himself his utter misery. Grant me to cherish humiliations, grant me to be enough of a saint to bear with the contempt of men. I have a thousand times more reasons to annihilate myself in Thy presence, O my God, than the holy priest on whose virtuous life I have been meditating. All his virtues will be mine, if Thou only grant me his humility. Humility draws the eye of God to man, and with it man needs nothing else, for, as St. Andrew says, humility is, *Sapientiæ solium, grantiæ pallium, gloriæ præludium.*

1st Point. *His love for God.* "It is enough, O Lord, it is enough!" How strong is such a love. When one loves God with all his heart, he finds God everywhere, in the bustle of life as well as in the solitude of prayer. More than once when he seemed to be taken up altogether with his work, the heart of Francis was burning with intense love, and he was heard to say: *Satis est, Domine, satis est.* How disinterested such love . . . . he had only one desire . . . God. It was painful to the saint to experience such delights in the discharge of his duties. Enough, O Lord, enough . . . I fear lest the sweetness of Thy consolation lessen the fervor of my intention, and the abundance of Thy gifts lead me to forget the giver.

2d Point. *Zeal of St. Francis for the salvation of his neighbor.* Though yet on earth, he possesses heaven; but his thoughts are for the many that are going to perdition. Rather part with all, even with God, to help these poor people . . . he feels that he must moderate his zeal, for fear of going too far to the detriment of others. . . . He is fond of sufferings, and this is the great weapon in the conversion of souls, and that is why he is heard to complain, Enough, O Lord, give me no more consolations; give me more labor and tribulations: *Amplius, Domine, amplius.*

3d Point. *Great humility.* Saint Francis mistrusts himself . . he despises himself and desires even that others should despise him. O God, better it is to receive Thy favors sparingly, than be exposed to not make a good use of them. Hating himself so, he has only one fear, that others may esteem him. What is the meaning of his prayer to God, asking to be spared so many great favors? . . . . He means to make a protest of his unworthiness; he is fearful lest the people at the sight of such favors may esteem one who deserves only contempt. O my God, give me true humility. Of humility a saint has said: *Humilitas, sapientiæ solium, gratiæ pallium, gloriæ præludium.*

XXIII. MEDITATION.

DECEMBER THE EIGHTH—THE PRIVILEGE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CONSIDERED IN THE PERSON OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY . . . GLORY AND HAPPINESS CONNECTED WITH IT.

1st.—REASONS OF THE PRIVILEGE.

2d.—THE WAY IT WAS GRANTED.

3d.—THE GLORY THAT CAME TO MARY THROUGH THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

1st Point. *The reasons of the privilege of the Immaculate Conception, show the greatness and the happiness of the mother of God.* The reasons of this great privilege, were the sublime designs of the Almighty on Mary. When the Fathers, in the Council of Trent, treated the question of original sin, which affects all mankind, they openly declared that the decree did not concern the Virgin Mother. Something of this kind must have taken place we fancy, in the council of the blessed Trinity, when that decree was issued that all should be born in sin. Each of the three persons brought forth reasons why such a law would have an exception in the ever-blessed Virgin Mary.

The Father saw in her the tender spouse who was to beget in time Him whom He begot from all eternity ; He would not permit that sin should defile her even for one instant.

The Son saw in Mary a mother more dear to Him than ever a mother was to her son, and as He could dispose in her favor, surely He granted her all in His power. Solomon did not give Bethsabee, his mother, time to ask ; he granted before she asked : "*Pete, mater mea, neque enim fas est ut avertam faciem tuam.*" When God selected for Himself a mother, who would dare say, that He was not at least as good to her as Solomon was to his? He knew what His mother Mary would ask, if being already in existence, she could have asked anything. He seems to hear her say in advance : "O my Son, what I ask of Thee, is that I may always be pure in Thy sight, that every moment of my life, even the very first moment, may belong exclusively to Thee." That prayer must have been heard. O mother, blessed above all mothers, and to the end of time it shall be said : *Benedicta sit sancta et immaculata Conceptio Beattissimae Virginis Mariæ.* Thy Son owes it both to His love for thee, and to His own glory. Thy blood is to course in His veins, He will not permit that the blood which is to pay the ransom of the world, be tainted at its origin.

The Holy Ghost saw in her the masterpiece of Divine work, a being in whom God would receive more glory than in all the rest of the creation. She was to be, properly speaking, "*The tabernaculum Dei cum hominibus,*" and that dwelling for God amongst men, He must fittingly adorn. The temple must be worthy of Him who is to dwell therein, and of Him who is to build it. To do one and the other, the virtue of the most high overshadowed Mary, so that not even the least stain is to be found in her.

What could be as honorable to the blessed virgin, as those titles, those functions, those ineffable relations which united her to God so intimately? Now all these required that she be conceived without sin. That privilege is the foundation of all others, or rather all others are derived from that one. As soon as I know that Mary is conceived without sin, her glorious maternity, her assumption . . . are no longer a mystery to me. If a mere creature is to be honored, it must be the virgin conceived without sin.

2d Point. *Glory and happiness of Mary in the way the privilege is granted.* First of all, such privilege is granted to her alone. God has lavished all His gifts on mankind, but this one He has granted only once. We heard of some saints, who were not hurt by ferocious lions, others who felt no pain in the midst of fire. . . . There were even some whom God sanctified in their mother's womb; but exemption from the stain of original sin was a favor which God granted to no one except Mary.

And how did God proceed, in order to adorn His mother with that singular gift? Is He going to commence again the work of creation, is He going to create her as He did the first man that came forth from His hands? If this was the case, the Immaculate Conception would only be a simple derogation from the law established by Almighty God for the propagation of mankind; but it will not be so of sinful parents. Mary is born without sin, the spring is corrupt, but the stream which flows from it is the clearest of streams. O wonder of wonders! The demon has under control all the sinful race of Adam, one alone excepted, and that one will one day crush his infernal head. An immense fire destroys all, and in the general conflagration a single stem remains untouched; that stem is not scorched, nor withered; it is even seen to blossom and yield fruit, and that fruit is the salvation of mankind; a cruel tyrant makes the whole land desolate, he holds all under his sway; yet one city resists, and that city becomes the queen of the universe . . . well, that privileged one, that miraculous stem, that city, is no other than the blessed Virgin Mary. . . . "O city of God, wonderful things have been said of Thee!"[1]

Count now if you can the many privileges which came after the first granted to Mary: All graces and spiritual gifts which made of Mary the holiest person that ever lived, and that at the first moment of her existence; complete use of reason and of all its faculties; exemption from concupiscence and all evil inclinations, which are in others the consequence of original sin; an abundance of light, and a facility beyond all others for attaining perfection and corresponding with the interior graces, without ever giving way to the least imperfection. Mary at the first moment of her existence, is, to use the words of the Father, *præstantissimum universi orbis miraculum, abyssus miracu-*

1. Gloriosa dicta sunt de te, civitas Dei.—(Ps.)

lorum, tota miraculum. She is, as St. John Damascene has it, "a world of splendor, a most stupendous creation:" "*Quam mundus iste magnificus! Quam stupenda creatio.*"—(*Sermon on the Nativity of the B. M. V.*)

3d Point. *Honors paid to Mary in connection with the glorious privilege of her Immaculate Conception.* The honor paid to Mary in connection with her glorious privilege, shows how deep in the heart of man is the devotion to the blessed mother of God. When the subject was first broached, the whole world stood amazed. One was reminded of former times, when heretics contested Mary's right, the honor of Divine maternity. Clergy and lay people, universities and princes stood up like one man against an opinion detrimental to Mary's honor, and rejected by her children the world over. Speeches were made, books were written, public demonstrations were held, great solemnities were had in honor of the mother of God. And the same has been witnessed in our own days, when the infallible voice of the Church proclaimed to the whole world the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. What a sight, what joy in Rome and in every part of the world where the authority of the Church is respected! Everywhere the children of the Catholic Church gave vent to feelings of joy, and welcomed the news of the new honor paid to the virgin mother.

Holy virgin, can one love thee and not be rejoiced by the honors paid to thee? All is common between mothers and children; the thought of Mary's happiness either causes us to forget our own sorrows or enables us to bear them. Yes; we return thanks to Almighty God with thyself for the great things that have been done to thee. O Mary, accept our congratulations, condescend to love us always, and ask of Jesus that we become every day less unworthy of His love and of thine own: *Gaude, virgo gloriosa, super omnes speciosa. Vale, o valde decora et, pro nobis Christum exora.*

1st Point. *Glory and happiness of Mary in the motives of her Immaculate Conception.* These reasons were the great designs God had on her. The Father saw in Mary a loving spouse, who was to beget in time Him whom He begot in eternity. The Son saw in her a mother who was to be loved more than any mother on earth; the Holy Ghost

saw in her the masterpiece of God's work, in which He would work more wonders than in all the world together. The three Divine persons owed her this glorious privilege. Can one imagine anything more glorious than the relationship between Mary and these Divine persons, and her future mission which rendered necessary exemption from the original sin?

2d Point. *Glory and happiness of Mary, in the way this privilege is granted her.* This privilege is granted to her alone . . . in order that the wonder may be the more stupendous. God does not create Mary in the manner He created Adam, but from a corrupt spring He causes to flow the clearest of streams. City of God, how many wonderful things will be said of Thee, on account of this privilege, and how many other privileges will follow this one! All graces and spiritual favors; the full use of reason from the first moment of Thy conception and exemption from all concupiscence; all these were to be the complement of the privilege of the Immaculate Conception. She was even then a world of splendor, and the greatest of miracles.

3d Point. *Honors paid to Mary on the occasion of the Immaculate Conception.* To defend Mary's honor and glorious privilege, the clergy and the laity, universities and princes vied with each other, and what was seen in former ages, has been witnessed in our own. Where is the Catholic who did not welcome with an immense joy the dogma proclaiming the Immaculate Conception of the mother of God?

XXIV. MEDITATION.

SAME SUBJECT—THE PRIVILEGE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, IN ITS RELATION TO OURSELVES—HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO HAVE A SPECIAL DEVOTION TO THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

1st.—BECAUSE THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION TEACHES MANY LESSONS TO MEDITATIVE SOULS.

2d. — BECAUSE MANY ARE THE BLESSINGS THAT SUCH A DEVOTION DRAWS UPON THOSE WHO PRACTICE IT.

1st Point. *Lessons learned from the Immaculate Conception.* Some of those lessons are fit for all classes of people, some are especially adapted to priests.

I. In meditating on this mystery, one must of necessity breathe the sweet perfume of innocence. Whether we consider God dealing with Mary, or Mary dealing with God, all here tells us of the horror due to sin, of the esteem due to grace, and of the desire we should always have for the greatest perfection.

God bears such a hatred to sin, that even one, and that one committed by another, and blotted out on the first day, would have been a hindrance to the realization of His plan concerning Mary. On the other hand, grace is of such a price in His sight, that in order to favor Mary above all other creatures, He gave her His grace, before all other things, in preference to all other things, and in place of all other things. Before all other things.—The first thing He gives her is His grace, she must not be one moment without it. In preference to all other things.—O wonder of wonders; God is about to come amongst men; He must have a mother. For her sake He will exhaust all His attributes, His wisdom, His power, all His infinite perfections . . . and what does He do for her? He gives her His grace, even God has

nothing more precious. God as He is can do nothing greater for the one loved above all in creation. In place of all other things.—Mary will receive spiritual goods, of temporal ones she will receive none. . . Riches, pleasures, honors after which so many crave, she will not know; the spiritual goods she will have will be enough for her, and with the fullness thereof she will enrich the world. Learn now what is the price of grace with God. So far did you have such an exalted idea of it; and for your own and for your brethren's sake, did you prefer the grace of God to all other things?

Let us think of the esteem Mary had for grace, she who is called the virgin most prudent; all her attention was to keep that grace within her and she was very eager to profit by it. The conduct of Mary, when compared with ours, should make us blush. She was not like us inclined to evil, but to good, and yet she takes the same precautions that we take on account of our well-known frailty; that is, she shuns the world, she watches over herself, works continually, does penance and prays fervently. . . . She is full of grace, since the very first moment of her existence, and yet far from resting in security at the thought of all she has received, she disposes herself to receive yet more favors, and so she goes on always progressing and increasing in merits, and every day adds to her spiritual treasure. There is here, we must confess, a double condemnation of our conduct; lack of prudence exposes us to forfeit the grace of God, and lack of courage hinders us from increasing our merits. Were we watchful as Mary, the graces we receive would preserve us from sin; were we as faithful, we might well attain the perfection of our holy calling.

II. Special lessons for the priests of Almighty God. Mary was the purest of all creatures, free from original sin, confirmed in grace, and adorned with all spiritual gifts, and why? Because she was to be closely connected with the most high God.

Cannot the dignity of the priest be in a measure compared to that of Mary? If Gerson has said of Mary, *tam divina est Maria, ut quidquid Scriptura dicit de Sapientia æterna, Ecclesia dicat de Maria*,—can we not, after St. Ambrose, say of the priest, *Qui sacerdotem dicit, divinum prorsus insinuat virum?* Is he not to some extent like Mary, connected with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in the work of the redemption? In order to carry in her virginal womb the Word

made flesh, it was not enough for Mary to be conceived without sin; the Holy Ghost Himself fitted her for her high mission by the fullness of His gifts: *Ui dignum Filii tui habitaculum effici merere tur, Spiritu Sancto co-operante, præparasti;* what purity, what holiness must be that of the priest, who every day becomes, as it were, the parent of Jesus Christ on the altar, who touches Him with his hands and receives Him within himself. "*Si haberes angelicam puritatem et sancti Joannis Baptistae sanctitatem, non esses dignus hoc sacramentum accipere, nec tractare.*"—(*Imitation.*) *Inoffensos et immaculatos decet Dei existere sacerdotes.*—(Conc. Tolet. iv, c. x.) However, the good priest needs not fear, his effort to honor Mary in her immaculate conception will obtain for him the purity which his holy vocation demands of him.

2d Point. *The Immaculate Conception, a source of consolation to all who honor it.* A source of great consolation to all devout servants of Mary, is the knowledge they have of her wonderful power and credit with Almighty God. If the virgin most powerful is for them, who will be against them? And that is why they strive every day to become dearer and dearer to the mother of God; and who can doubt but she must look with special favor upon those who honor her immaculate conception. She loves to have us unite with her in returning thanks to God for her priceless privilege. It is not enough for her to say eternally, My soul magnifies the Lord. She says to all reasonable beings, Praise ye the Lord with me. And he who heeds such an invitation, deserves a large share in the infinite blessings which it is in her power to dispense to mankind. St. Francis Xavier, St. Theresa, Blessed Alphonsus, Rodriguez, Peter Fourier, Father Avila and a number of others gave us their own experience when they asserted, that we may obtain anything we stand in need of, if we honor Mary in this her most glorious privilege. Temptations were overcome, plagues averted, and miracles were wrought by this simple act of faith: "Mary was conceived without sin;" or by this simple and childlike prayer: "O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us, who have recourse to thee:" Remember also the miraculous medal, the confraternity of our Lady of Victories, and the rich treasure of indulgences granted to those who wear the scapular of the Immaculate Conception.

Let us therefore be of the same mind with our holy mother the Church, and let us see what we can do to honor this greatest of all her

privileges and to cause it to be honored by others. The more zealous you will be, the more will you experience the protection of that tender mother. Your last day is approaching, soon will you have to give a strict account of the graces you received, of the obligations laid upon you, and, alas, also perhaps of so many transgressions. Who will protect you in that dreadful moment? Oh more than blessed is the priest who can say with confidence to the mother of Him who is to be his judge: "I have spoken for thee, mother Mary, speak now for me; I have fought for thee, fight now for me; I have loved thee, my desire was to make thee loved by others. Oh save me now!"

Renew your consecration to Mary, and resolve to practice yourself, and to propagate as far as you can, devotion to the immaculate conception of our blessed lady.

1st Point. *Lessons contained for us in the great privilege of the Immaculate Conception.* All in this mystery tells us of the horror due to sin, of the esteem due to Divine grace, and the desire we should experience for true perfection. There is such an opposition between God and sin, that even the least strain of sin, though immediately blotted out, would have been a hindrance to the realization of His plans concerning the ever-blessed virgin Mary. In order to favor her as never a creature has been favored, God gives her His grace, before all things, in preference to all other things, and in place of all other things. This is God's opinion concerning grace, what is mine? And what an exalted idea of grace Mary had, she who did so much to preserve and increase it within her. She had nothing to fear; yet she takes every precaution . . . . I have everything to fear, and am so imprudent. . . . Mary had to be so holy, that she might carry the Word made flesh in her womb; is it not the same sacred flesh, which is every day present on the altar through my ministry? Is it not the same that I handle, and on which I feed?

2d Point. *Graces we may expect if we are devout to the Immaculate Conception.* Mary is all powerful, and nothing will make us dearer to her than our devotion to her most glorious privilege. Her desire is, that we join with her in returning thanks to Almighty God for the immense favor granted her. . . . Temptations have been overcome, miracles

without number have been wrought by this simple invocation : "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us, who have recourse to thee."

XXV. MEDITATION.

DECEMBER 21—SAINT THOMAS—TENDER MERCY OF GOD FOR ST. THOMAS.

1st.—GOD'S PATIENCE IN BEARING WITH HIS INCREDULITY.

2d.—GOD'S CONDESCENSION IN STRIVING AGAINST IT.

3d.—GOD'S VICTORY OVER THOMAS' INCREDULITY.

1st Point. *God's patience in bearing with the incredulity of St. Thomas.* The sin of Thomas was an enormous one. After all the sermons he had heard and all the miracles he had seen, convinced as he was of the divinity of the Son of God, whom he had heard so often telling of His resurrection on the third day, the news brought by the holy women ought not to have been a surprise to him, but rather a great cause of joy ; yet he calls it a delusion. In the same manner he refuses to believe those who have seen the risen Savior, those who have spoken to Him and even eaten with Him ; according to him, Peter, John, and all the other apostles are mere visionaries, weak-minded people ; he alone is of a strong mind. What pride, what presumption is his ! He wishes to dictate even to the Lord, he will believe only under such and such conditions : "*Unless I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.*"—(John xx : 25.) Oh what a bold and sacrilegious pretension ! He says openly that even if he saw and heard Jesus Christ, he would not believe ; he must touch Him . . . unless I put my finger . . . unless I put my hand. . . . Why, Thomas, if the hearing and the seeing are not enough to convince you, will you be more convinced by the sense of touch, which is certainly a less delicate sense ? One would think he has lost his reason as well as his faith. . . . I will not believe. If he believes not, he is lost. Can one be so rash in risking, as he did, his eternal salvation ?

The sin of Thomas was not like that of Peter, the sin of a moment; he persevered in it for several days, in spite of all he heard from others, in spite of all the proofs given him. In the conduct of Thomas there was an obstinacy provoking to God and scandalous to others . . . yet the good Master put up with it!

It was no doubt very painful for Mary, for the other apostles and the multitude of believers to see their joy marred by the obstinacy of St. Thomas; as long as he refused to hear the Church, why was he not cut off? "If he heareth not the Church, let him be to Thee as a heathen and a publican." The case was plain, yet Jesus does not wish the principle to be here applied. He is patient, He wishes others to imitate Him. . . He can afford to wait. How reluctant is God to abandon a soul He has once loved and benefitted! And what does He not do to draw that soul from the abyss of misery even after her withdrawal from Him!

3d Point. *God's condescension is striving against St. Thomas' incredulity.* Eight days went by, days of joy and happiness for the other disciples, but days of anxiety and remorse for the guilty apostle. After eight days, Jesus is seen again, and this time the manifestation is for the very purpose of convincing Thomas. God condescends to the weakness of His apostle; in His excessive charity He grants the request the latter had rashly made: "*And after eight days His disciples were again within, and Thomas with them; Jesus cometh, the door being shut, and stood in the midst and said: Peace be to you.*" How did He enter, all doors being shut? Behold He is in the midst of them, *in medio eorum;* the Shepherd with His flock. At the sight of Jesus in His glory, at the sound of His voice, what a thrill of joy rewarded that assembly! *Then He saith to Thomas*—Why is he the first to draw the Lord's attention? Peter and John were there; they say Mary herself was there; and Jesus spoke to none of these. He takes no notice of the dignity of some that are there; but He notices the one that stands in need of his mercy. In this instance we see the heart of Jesus, as represented in the parables of the prodigal son and the good shepherd: He leaves the ninety-nine in the desert, and goeth after the one that hath perished. "Son, Thou art always with me . . . but Thy brother was dead and is come to life."—(Luc. xv: 31, 32.): "Draw near to me faithless disciple, Thou art so dear to me, I will not

consent that Thou shouldst go to perdition. I am going to comply with thy request. Behold, here are the hands that have healed so many sick, and lavished so many blessings upon the people. Here are the feet that were so eager to run after the stray sheep; here is the heart that was opened by the lance. . . . Behold, and if to see Me is not enough, touch Me; *put thy finger into My hands, bring hither thy hand and put it into My side*, plunge into that heart that loves thee still, *and be not incredulous, but faithful:* Put in thy finger hither . . . and bring hither thy hand and put it into My side; and be not incredulous, but faithful." O unutterable compassion! O sweet mercy! O surpassing tenderness! Priests of God, do you thus welcome the poor sinner?

3d Point. *God's victory over the apostle's incredulity.* The Savior with one glance illumined Magdalen, and that glance, according to the language of the Church, was a dart which kindled Divine love in her heart: *Currit amore saucia;* with a glance also, He melted into tears the apostle St. Peter, who had just denied Him: *Conversus Dominus respexit Petrum;* later still with His name only He will transform Saul into another man on the way to Damascus. "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest;" but to convert Thomas, He makes use of his wounds.

Scarcely has he touched the sacred wounds, than faith is restored and he exclaims: "*My Lord and my God!*" Grief and love will not allow him to say more; grief, for he sees the extent of his sin; love for he is conquered by the infinite mercy of Him he has so cowardly offended, and who for revenge, heaps favors upon him. In fact, he says all in these few words. He confesses Jesus to be his Lord, "my Lord;" he wishes now to serve and love Him. He confesses Him to be his God, "*Deus Meus;*" his only desire is to love Him and to enable others to love Him. He is now healed from his blindness and ranked among those who are to be the light of the world. To a certain extent we may apply to him these words of Scripture: "*Sicut tenebræ ejus, ita et lumen ejus.*"—(Ps. cxxxviii: 2.) The fault of his incredulity will be of as much profit to us, as the light of his faith. St. Gregory says even more; *Plus nobis profuit ad fidem Thomæ infidelitas, quam fides discipulorum credentium.*—(Homil. xxvi.) Oh what zeal he will display in preaching the resurrection, in which he believed only because he was compelled to do so by a miracle of the charity of God. He went to preach the gospel to the Parthians, to the Medes, Persians, Scythians, and Hircanians;

and in India at a place called Calamina, he died a martyr, a hope he had long entertained, fittingly terminating his apostleship which had won so many souls to Christ. The barbarous king of that country commanded him to be run through with a sword, and when dying, his last words are said to have been: "My Lord and my God."

Let us ask through the intercession of St. Thomas, that ardent and generous faith by which he atoned for his former incredulity; and as we know that the Savior made use of His sacred wounds to heal both the mind and the heart of His apostle, let us remember that at the altar we partake of His glorified flesh, which is a sure remedy for all evils that may affect the soul: *Quid tam efficax ad curanda conscientiæ vulnera, necnon ad purgandam mentis aciem, quam Christi vulnerum sedula meditatio?*—(St. Bernard.)

1st Point. *God's patience in bearing with the apostle's incredulity.* Thomas' crime was an enormous one. What pride and presumption he has! He dictates, as it were, to Christ Himself, and what a sacrilegious pretension! How painful this must have been to Mary and the apostles, and what a scandal to all weak-minded and faltering people. His sin is not like the sin of Peter, the sin of a moment; no, it is continued for eight days. Jesus does not permit, however, that the apostle be cut off from the church as He Himself had directed.

2d Point. *God's condescension in the apostle's conversion.* Our Lord shows Himself once more to the assembled apostles, and this time He manifests Himself for the sake of Thomas. After having said, "Peace be to you," He looks at Thomas, and speaking to him He says: "Come nearer, thou My apostle, I cannot allow thee to go to perdition, rather than comply with thy rash request . . . . see, touch Me, satisfy thyself; but do believe." O holy compassion, O surpassing goodness of God!

3d Point. *God's victory over the apostle's incredulity.* Scarcely has the guilty apostle touched the sacred wounds of our Lord, than faith is restored and he exclaims: "My Lord and My God!" He can say no more; but he said really all he could say. He confesses Jesus as his Lord; he confesses Him to be his God; henceforth he will live only to serve and love God and to win souls to Christ. O Jesus, when dying

for Thy sake, with what a loving heart he will utter the same words: "O my Lord, O my God."

XXVI. MEDITATION.

DECEMBER 26—SAINT STEPHEN.

"*Stephen, full of grace and fortitude, did great wonders and miracles among the people . . . . . and they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke.*"—(Acts vi: 8, 10.) Fullness of grace and wisdom and fortitude, resulting from his docility to the Spirit of God; by these words does the scripture eulogize St. Stephen; and this is what made him a true minister of Almighty God.

1st.—FULL OF GRACE AND FAITHFUL IN ALL HIS CONDUCT.

2d.—FULL OF WISDOM IN THE ACT OF PREACHING.

3d.—FULL OF FORTITUDE IN HIS MARTYRDOM.

1st Point. *Saint Stephen, full of grace and faithful in all his conduct.* He was the first of the deacons: *primicerius diaconorum*, says Saint Augustine. In that quality he had charge of what property belonged to the Church, he had besides the care of the widows; those, we mean, who, parting with the world, devoted themselves to the service of God. In that two-fold capacity he was responsible both to God and to man: to God as regarded his conscience, to men as far as his reputation was concerned. Many were the dangers concerning one and the other office, but being full of grace he was found faithful.

I. As a dispensator of the goods that belonged to the Church, he had to be on his guard against one temptation, which had already made one victim among the apostles of the newly-born Church of God, and which was to make several more of them in the course of time. In order that the evil consequences which come from the desire of money might

be avoided by the clergy—*Radix omnium malorum cupiditas*—it was necessary, says St. John Chrysostom, that side by side with the crime of Judas, God should set an example and a remedy. The administration of St. Stephen was a truly disinterested and blameless one. As soon as he entered into the duties of his office, all complaints and grumblings were at an end. All the poor, being equally relieved, had but words of praise for him. In his charity he sympathized with all miseries, all he received he gave away, and, providing for the necessities of others, he forgot no one except himself. When one is full of grace, how easily he tramples under foot the things of this world, and what contentment he enjoys in his holy poverty! Stephen full of grace.

II. Having care of the widows, his duty was to instruct them, to direct them, to console them; he had often to deal with them. This was not without great danger, both to his virtue and to his sacred character. But he kept himself aloof from such danger. His pure morals always made him conspicuous amongst all. His reputation in regard to this matter stood so high that the most malicious never questioned it. But how did it happen that he was canonized by public opinion while holding an office which could be so easily assailed by calumny? True to the grace he had abundantly received, he kept a strict watch over himself, and took all precautions inspired to him by the Spirit of God. He was serious, yet without affectation: prudent, without dissimulation; mortified and austere, yet without rudeness; lenient, yet not weak; in a word, he was that true apostolic worker, who never has reason to blush at what he does or what he says: *operarium inconfusibilem*. In every circumstance his conduct was so prudent, so modest, that his appearance suggested to everyone the presence of an angel: *Viderunt faciem ejus tanquam faciem angeli.* The grace, the powerful grace by which St. Stephen preserved unsullied both his virtue and his fair name, we have received ourselves; let us be vigilant, austere, men of prayer and mortification, and the same grace will preserve us as well as St. Stephen.

2d Point. *Saint Stephen full of wisdom in his preaching.* Detained by duty in Jerusalem, he cannot go with the other apostles to carry the tidings of the Gospel to the extremities of the earth; but his zeal, though confined to the limits of one city, is fully as burning as

theirs. He preaches in the stronghold of the Jewish religion; thick is the cloud he has to dispel, and hard the prejudices he has to uproot. What a preacher he was we may see in the speech he made in the synagogue.[1] He urges the Jews by reminding them of the crimes of their fathers, and the calamities which visited them as a consequence of their crimes. They themselves had gone further than their fathers, crucifying not only the prophets, but Him who is greater than all the prophets . . having been more guilty, how can they expect that the punishment will be less? Had the saint said these things in a haughty and passionate manner, he would only have provoked the anger of his hearers; but, being full of wisdom, he tempered severity by moderation, and the strength of the argument by the easy way in which he put it; he said: "Ye men, brethren and fathers, give ear. Brethren, hear ye me; it is through zeal for your salvation that I speak to you thus. I am no stranger to you; I am, like you, a descendant from father Abraham, and I honor you as fathers. . . . . But despise not my words, which are the words of God; refuse not the grace which is to-day offered you."

The Scriptures say but a few words on the result of his preaching, yet how much meaning there is in these few words: "*And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke.*" It was not the man who spoke thus; no, but the Spirit of God spoke by him. However, though all were convinced, they were not all converted. In the crowd he could see many that were obstinate, and in order to save those, his zeal prompts him to make a stronger effort, and he breaks forth in reproaches and threats of Divine vengeance; "*With a stiff neck and uncircumcised hearts and ears you always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do you also.*" To speak thus to these excited people was very dangerous;[2] but the holy deacon is prepared for any emergency, even to the sacrifice of his own life, rather than prove a traitor to the cause he had been appointed to defend. A man of God may be killed, but conquered, never.

3d Point. *St. Stephen full of fortitude in his martyrdom.* He showed his fortitude when, dying, he forgave his murderers. We see here a double miracle: one of patience, the other of charity.

1. Acts vii.
2. Now, hearing these things . . . . they gnashed with their teeth at him.

I. Miracle of patience. *They stoned Stephen, invoking and saying: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."* Do you wish to know what he suffered? They stoned him. This was a cruel torment, destined only to the greatest of criminals, the blasphemer. Do you wish to know how he suffered, how calm, yet how more than courageous he was? *Invocantem et dicentem;* invoking and saying, Lord Jesus. . . . Whilst he is, as it were, weltering in his own blood, what does he do, of what is he thinking? He is invoking the Lord Jesus; he is thinking of committing his spirit into his hands: "*Receive my spirit.*" It is only the example and the grace of God that can teach a man to suffer in that way. Let us listen to the words of the first martyr of Christ: "*Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of God standing at the right hand of God.*" . . . . And we lack strength, the least trouble overcomes us; oh let us take courage in the example left us by this great saint. With the eye of faith, let us see the heavens opened; a little patience and we will be there. Behold Jesus standing at the right hand of His Father, looking at us, supporting us, and soon about to reward us if we only prove faithful to Him.

II. A miracle of charity. At the hands of his murderers, a shower of stones crushes the martyr, and he prays for them. He loses sight of what he suffers and his thoughts are only of their blindness. One would say he loves them more than himself. When he prays for himself, he does so on his feet and in a low tone of voice, but when he is praying for his murderers, he does so on bended knees and with a loud voice, saying: "*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*" How many souls will be saved by the prayer of this hero of charity! The conversion of the apostle St. Paul is believed to have been the first fruit of dying Stephen's prayer: "*Nam si martyr Stephanus non orasset, Ecclesia Paulum non haberet; sed ideo de terra erectus est Paulus, quia in terra inclinatus exauditus est Stephanus.*"—(St. Augustine.) After such a sublime prayer, how sweet it must have been for our saint to die: "*And when he had said this, he fell asleep in the Lord.*"

Dying after having given a three-fold testimony to Christ, the testimony of his morals by his blameless conduct, the testimony of his word by his preaching full of zeal and wisdom, and lastly the testimony of his blood by the cruel martyrdom he suffered with the courage of a hero—what more can a minister of God do for his Master? O my God,

give me a little of the virtue of St. Stephen, and may I die, as he did, making an act of perfect charity.

1st Point. *Saint Stephen full of grace and safe amongst the dangers of his ministry.*

I. Having been intrusted with the property of the church, he had to guard himself against the sin which had been the ruin of Judas, and to repair the scandal given by the traitor, by showing himself perfectly disinterested. . . . St. Stephen gives away all he receives. A heart full of the grace of God is not easily tempted by the riches or the goods of this world. II. In his care for the holy widows, he kept unsullied both his virtue and his fair name.

2d Point. *Saint Stephen full of wisdom in his preaching.* Though confined to one city, the zeal of Saint Stephen is very ardent. His speech is very strong, yet tempered with modesty and mildness: *Viri fratres et patres, audite me.* It was not the man; no, it was the Spirit of God that spoke through Saint Stephen.

3d Point. *St. Stephen full of fortitude in his martyrdom.* When dying he forgives his murderers. A miracle of patience: They stoned Stephen. A miracle of charity: *Invocantem et dicentem.* If, by faith, we behold the heavens opened, we will be as patient and as zealous as Saint Stephen for the salvation of our neighbor.

XXVII. MEDITATION.

DECEMBER 27—SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST—THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED.

1st.—THE APOSTLE WAS THE FRIEND AND THE FAVORITE FRIEND OF JESUS.

2d.—HOW HE PREPARED HIMSELF FOR SUCH A FAVOR.

1st Point. *Saint John was the disciple whom Jesus loved.* By this trait John is distinguished from all other apostles and exalted above

all the saints of the new dispensation. The special love of Jesus for Saint John was illustrated on the day of the Last Supper, when He allowed him to lean his head against His sacred breast, and also on Calvary, when the dying Jesus left to his care all He had dearest on earth, His blessed mother: *Ecce, Behold thy mother.*

I. To fully understand the first of these favors, we must recall the circumstances connected with it. It was the eve of the day before Christ suffered; all looked forward to the bloody sacrifice, and, as a prelude, the God-man had just instituted the sacrament of the altar; His love for man could not go further; "*He loved them unto the end.*" On the other hand, the apostles were in consternation; He had just declared to them that one of them was to betray Him. . . . While all were vacillating between anguish and fear, what a sight it must have been for them to see John's head leaning on the bosom of our Lord, and that whilst all were seized with fear, John was enjoying a sweet rest on the heart of the good Master. Could he have taken such a liberty in so solemn a moment, if he had not been sure of the tender love of Jesus for him? It was Jesus Himself, says Bossuet, who invited him to do so without fear. "Jesus presses John in His arms, draws him close to His heart . . . He gives him, as it were, possession of His own heart, the source of all his favors, and He gives him leave to rest there, as if it were his own place. Come, oh my beloved, before all ages I have chosen thee to be the doctor of charity; come, then, and drink it in, at its very source; come and learn here those words full of unction, by which thou wilt one day move thy fellow-men. Draw closer still to this heart, all filled with love for man, and in order the better to speak of My love, feel how I love."

Priest of God, you have the holy Eucharist, you have the heart of Jesus. Do you as St. John did, make it your place of rest when you are tired or grieved. Cast all your anxieties into that heart which is your property. Go and learn all you are in need of learning, how to know God and love Him. Up to this day Saint John, according to Saint Hilary, had been but a poor fisherman, knowing just enough to handle his nets: *Manibus lino occupatis, veste humida, pedibus limo oblitis, totus e navi,* a mere boatman. After his mysterious sleep on the heart of Jesus, he soars beyond the beginning of time, to find out the principle of all things and to say to the world: "*In the beginning was the*

Word." In the heart of Jesus it was that he saw the uncreated light: "*Ipse Joannes sublimium prædicator, et lucis internæ atqua æternæ fixis oculis contemplator.*"—(St. Augustine.) There it was, also, that he learned the definition of God: "*God is charity.*" There it was that he learned the secret of touching and changing the heart of man. The words of the priest will neither touch nor move the hearts of his fellow-men, unless he himself is devoted, sincerely devoted to the sacred heart of Jesus.

II. The second favor granted to Saint John was on Calvary, when the Son of God was in His agony on the cross. When the end is near, Jesus gives away all that is His own. His blood He gives to men, His paradise to the repentant thief, all His merits to the Church . . but His mother is left to Him, and He gives her to His beloved disciple, and, at the same time the disciple, He gives over to His mother: "*Behold thy son . . . behold thy mother.*" By these words He implants in the heart of Mary the affection of a mother for Saint John, who is to be her son, and in the heart of St. John He implants the affection of the most devoted son, that he may love Mary as his mother. And He gave to His apostle all he needed to replace Him fittingly. Oh how holy he must have been made then, he who was to take the place of Jesus in Mary's love. By his life he was destined to remind her of her Son, to be a living image of Him. Besides, the very desire that Mary there formed, to render the image as perfect as possible, occasioned additional graces to be granted to John. The charity of the adopted son was increased by the daily contact with the loving heart of Mary.

The mother of God became on Calvary the mother of all Christians, but in an especial manner the mother of priests. If Saint John, as a disciple, represented all the Christians, as an apostle he represented the clergy. Yes; every good priest can say: The heart of the Word incarnate belongs to me; Mary is my mother, I also am the beloved of Jesus. But what shall we do to show ourselves worthy of such a favor?

2d Point. *How St. John prepared himself to become the beloved of Jesus.* The purity and the fidelity of the apostle may account, according to the Fathers, for the predilection on the part of Jesus for St. John. Because he was a virgin, he was granted the privilege of resting on the heart of Jesus, and because he never wavered in his fidelity, Mary was given him for a mother.

I. Of all the disciples of Jesus, Saint John was the only one who lived in the state of virginity, and no one can be surprised that he was called, in preference to others, the beloved disciple: *Qui diligit cordis munditiam, habebit amicum regem.* Jesus Himself was the Son of a virgin, the teacher and the model of the sublimest virginity; whom, then, amongst the apostles could He love better than the one who resembled himself so well, because he was a virgin? Who was better entitled to rest on the heart of the King of Angels than St. John, who was so little himself below the angels? If ever there was one worthy of the confidence of the thrice-holy God, to whom eternal secrets might be made known, it was surely our saint who, by the purity of his heart, deserved even then to see God. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God. This is, then, the first reason why John was the beloved of Jesus: "*Diligebat eum Jesus, quonium specialis prærogativa castitatis ampliori dilectione fecerat dignum.*"—(St. Gregory.) The second reason was the constancy of his love.

II. Many there are who are friends in times of prosperity, few when things go ill with their friends. Many of the disciples followed Jesus to the hall of the supper, very few were at the foot of the cross. We are true to God as long as he makes straight the way, and supports us by His grace; but as soon as the hour of sacrifice is come, when an effort is to be made or when we feel loneliness . . . then we lack courage, we falter at the sight of the chalice . . . . then it was and there that Jesus awaited us; had we been constant, we would indeed have become his beloved; see how the constancy of St. John was rewarded. All the others fled; he alone follows his Master to the foot of the cross, there he stays with unflinching perseverance. The dying Jesus has a treasure He wishes to dispose of; to whom will He bequeath it except to him who is so persevering in his love? "*When Jesus, therefore, saw His mother, and the disciple standing whom He loved, He said to His mother: Woman, behold thy son.*"

Let us make our choice. We have seen how St. John became the dearly beloved friend of the Son of God, and we know how to be so favored ourselves. Oh holy purity, oh heavenly innocence, oh constancy of love, when shall we esteem you as we ought? By the practice of these virtues, we can have Mary for our mother and Jesus for our friend.

When at the altar to-day, let us be more fervent than usual. Soon we will possess the heart on which St. John rested; let us give ourselves up to Jesus, and, after communion, let us ask of Him to tell Mary, giving him our names individually, what He said, pointing to St. John: *Woman, behold thy son.* Blessed Gertrude is witness that this prayer is pleasing to Jesus; and that He always hears it.

1st Point. *Saint John was that disciple whom Jesus loved* The predilection of the Savior for this apostle is manifested in two peculiar circumstances: at the Last Supper and on Calvary. At the Last Supper the apostles were all in sorrow on account of the words Jesus had just spoken: "One of you will betray me." It was at that moment that John was seen leaning his head on the breast of his Master. To show himself so familiar; he must have been assured beforehand of the tender affection Jesus bore him. . . . Jesus Himself it was who drew John near His heart and gave him possession of it; and what benefits did he draw from that immense treasure to which he had access? O priest of God, you have access to the same heart in the holy Eucharist. While dying on Calvary, Jesus gave His mother to St. John, and He also gives John to Mary. As a disciple, John represented the whole Christian world; as an apostle, he represented the priests of God's Church.

2d Point. *How Saint John prepared himself to become the beloved of Jesus.* By his purity and the constancy of his love, The tender love of Jesus, the Son of the virgin, the doctor and the model of virginity, was assured to one who, like Himself, was a virgin; the constancy of his love also made him very dear to our Lord. Whilst all others left Him, John followed Him to the foot of the cross. Virginal purity and constancy in love, these, then, will prepare me to possess the heart of Jesus, these will give me Mary for my mother.

XXVIII. MEDITATION.

JANUARY 25—CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL—CONTEMPLATION.

1st.—CONTEMPLATE THE PERSONS.

2d.—LISTEN TO WHAT THEY SAY.

3d.—CONSIDER WHAT THEY DO.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Saul was on the way to Damascus, there to persecute the disciples of the Savior with the same fierceness he had already displayed in Judea, when he finds himself suddenly surrounded with an extraordinary light; he falls to the ground; he is, as it were, thunderstruck, and he hears a voice which says: "Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute Me?" "*who art Thou, O Lord?*" The same voice answers: "*I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.*" Trembling and astonished, Saul adds: "*Lord, what willest Thou that I should do?*" At the command of Jesus Christ he rises from the ground, and some one leading him by the hand, for he has now lost his sight, he goes to the city where Ananias will tell him what to do. Ananias restores to him his sight, and baptizes him, and from that moment Saul becomes an ardent apostle of Christ.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Represent to yourself, a short way from Damascus, a certain open spot, and there Saul and with him a number of people, who have come to help him carry out his murderous designs against the Christians

THIRD PRELUDE.—Ask of God to give you the knowledge and a deep sense of His infinite mercy, which has brought about and continues to work so many wonderful conversions.

1st Point. *Consider the persons.* In heaven Jesus Christ casting an eye of pity on His fierce persecutor, whom He is to change into a vessel of election for the good of the Church and the sanctification of of many: "*This man is a vessel of election to me, to carry my name be-*

fore the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel." On earth at Damascus, see the terror of the Christians, when they hear of the coming within their city of that enemy, the fiercest of all, and when they hear of his murderous designs. At Jerusalem the priests are jubilant when Saul comes and asks for power to persecute the Christians; he was to be the fit instrument of their hatred. On the road, amongst the companions of Saul, there were many whose designs were full as dark as Saul's himself; let your attention dwell especially on Saul, the leader of the persecution.

Reflect on his violent temper, his pharisaical heart,[1] his attachment to the religion of the Jews.[2] He is provoked when the religion of Jesus is mentioned before him; his eyes, his countenance, all his frame shows that he is a man thirsting for blood, one who has shed some already, and is eager to shed more; yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter. How triumphant he seems to be when he sees Damascus where he shall soon be . . . . and then of a sudden see him on the ground, pale and shivering from head to foot, trembling and astonished. His companions, too, are struck with amazement; the men who went in company with him stood amazed. . . . And a few days after see him humbly receiving baptism, preaching the Gospel and confounding the Jews. Adore the power and the great mercy of the Son of God. Let you share with the joy of the faithful; when they saw in their midst a fearless defender, a friend and a brother in the person of him who started for Damascus with a mind made up to destroy all its Christian citizens. With them let you say: Give glory to the Lord for He is good, and His mercy endureth forever.

2d Point. *Listen to the words.* The priests compliment Saul on his zeal for the Jewish law, say to him they will lend him all the help they can, in order to destroy a sect which they hate so much. Saul returns them thanks, and says he will bring to Jerusalem bound in chains all the Christians he will lay his hands on; "*That if he found any men and women of this way, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.*" Pay attention especially to the voice of Jesus Christ: "*Saul, Saul.*" God calls him by name and calls him twice. He questions him,

1. I am a Pharisee, the son or Pharisees.—(Acts xxiii: 6.)

2. Abundantly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.—(Galat. i: 14.)

to give him a chance to consider himself and to reflect on his wicked conduct: "*Why dost thou persecute Me?* Why didst thou take arms against Me . . . I live in every one of those whom thou persecutest, and all their sufferings at thy hands are Mine. . . . What did I do to thee, what complaint hast thou against Me? Thou askest who I am, I will tell thee: *I am Jesus*, God made man in order to save man. . . . I am the Redeemer foretold by the prophets and denied by all nations. . . . Ah, how dearly I paid for thy salvation . . . . behold My wounds, and say if I deserve not to be loved rather than outraged; *I am Jesus whom thou dost persecute*" How sweet this word: I am Jesus! How touching and cutting the reproach: Whom thou dost persecute! It is God Himself who proposes reconciliation, and to whom? I. . . . Thou. What compassion! What opposition! I . . . how condescending; Thou . . . how ungrateful. And yet I come not to punish; no, I offer thee forgiveness.

What does Saul answer? "Lord." O Lord, too late I have known Thee, O Thou the Messiah, O my Redeemer! It was against Thee that I have uttered so many blasphemies! Yes; and Thou forgivest: and this is the only revenge Thou takest of Thy persecutor. O my Master, O my God, what can I do now but love and serve Thee? "*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do*," what must I offer, what can I do? These words of Saul are few, yet how full of meaning, how expressive, how energetic: "*O verbum breve, sed plenum, sed vivum, sed efficax.*"—(St. Bernard.) These words express the humility, the hope and love of the future apostle; full of meaning, he is going to lead a life far different from the one he led before; the change a radical one, will be a lasting one as well. By giving himself up to the will of God, the sinner of former times becomes a great saint in a very short time, and he secures for himself a glorious destiny.

3d Point. *Consider what is done.* Confine yourself to what is done by Saul and by our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus had been already persecuted by this arch-enemy, when the first martyr had been slain, we may say, at his hands; it was he stoned Saint Stephen through the hands of his murderers; this is the opinion of St. Augustine: *Ut esset in omnium lapidantium manibus, ipse omnium vestimenta servabat.* The fight is not over yet. To speak ill of, to calumniate the person or the doctrine of Christ, to arouse the hatred of all against Him, and to

destroy His Church, all these is not the passing thought of Saul, for in him it is an actual disposition, a necessity, a profession ; we all know what was his design on going to Damascus.

But what does the Lord do? It was in His power to convert Saul by a sudden inspiration, or by the preaching of the apostles, or by the miracles which were of daily occurrence in Judea. . . . He had sent Moses to Pharao, Jonas to the Ninivites . . . but to convert Saul He makes use of no less a person than Himself. . . True, through Saul He will save souls without number, but how patient He was in supporting his wickedness? With what kindness He raises him up from the ground where he lay prostrate ; how sweet His voice when addressing him. . . . The outward light is only a figure of the one which illumines His soul. How many of the sublimest revelations were made to him in one instant, at the sound of the adorable name which was pronounced within his hearing, and which he then understood. Hereafter he will never ask again : "Who art Thou, O Lord?" Oh no, he knows Him now, he loves Him too. Oh how eager he is to give his life if by so doing he can make Jesus known and loved.

Now in a colloquy free from restraint, pour out your own heart into the heart of Jesus, so filled with mercy and compassion. The greatest favor we can do Him is to honor Him with our confidence. Treasures are laid open before you ; draw therefrom for you and for your brethren, but return thanks to God for the conversion of Saul, an event which has been of so great consequence for the Church. To the end of time, this miraculous event will illustrate to the world the surpassing mercy of the sacred heart of Jesus.

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons.* In heaven, Jesus Christ looks with pity on His persecutor whom He will soon make His apostle. On earth at Damascus, the faithful are terrified when they are apprised of Saul's coming ; in Jerusalem the priests are jubilant over his plans of extermination. On the road contemplate Saul, the leader and the soul of the persecution. Study well his violent temper ; all in him breathes terror, a man thirsting for blood. All at once you see him prostrate on the ground, pale and trembling. . . . and afterward behold him preaching the Gospel and confounding the Jews. Admire both the goodness

and the mercy of God. . . . join in the joys felt by the Christians of those days.

2d Point. *Listen to what is said.* The priests compliment Saul for his zeal for the Jewish law. Listen with special attention to the voice of Jesus Christ: "Saul, Saul." Why does He call twice? "Why dost thou persecute Me?" What complaint hast thou against Me? . . . . Thou wishest to know who I am. I will tell thee: I am Jesus. . . . See these wounds and judge if I deserve to be outraged or loved by thee. . . . Think next of every word said by the converted persecutor: O Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?

3d Point. *Consider what is done.* What Saul does in Judea and what he intends to do in Damascus. . . . Destroyer of the Church of Christ, that is his regular profession; and what does the Savior notwithstanding? In order to convert this great sinner He comes down from heaven. Oh with what kindness He raises him up when he lay prostrate on the ground! How many mysteries were made known to him when he was given to understand the meaning of the adorable name Jesus! Hereafter he will not say: "Who art Thou, O Lord?" Oh, how eager he is now to make Jesus known and loved.

XXIX. MEDITATION.

JANUARY 29—ST. FRANCIS OF SALES—STRENGTH AND ENERGY OF HIS MEEKNESS.

We know Mary Magdalen by her tears of repentance, St. Theresa by the ecstasies of her love, Saint Francis by his love of poverty, and Francis de Sales by his meekness; but yet are there many who have a correct idea of this virtue of St. Francis? Saint John Climacus asks himself the question: What is the meekness becoming a minister of Christ, that meekness which is to conquer the world and destroy error; that meekness to which the possession of the earth is promised, that is, the ruling over the minds and hearts of men? And he answers: That such meekness is more than human, that it is celestial, as God alone made man could teach such virtues to man, both by His words and by

His example. Meekness springs from fortitude just as fortitude springs from faith and love: "Out of the strong came forth meekness."—(Judges xiv : 14.) And St. John Chrysostom goes still further when he says: "*Nihil hac pastorali mansuetudine violentius.*" Such was the meekness of Saint Francis de Sales.

1st.—UNSWERVING MEEKNESS IN UNDERTAKING.

2d.—UNCHANGING IN THE EXECUTION OF WHAT HE HAD UNDERTAKEN.

1st Point. *Unswerving meekness in undertaking.* The saint was ready to sacrifice everything for the honor of God—nature, riches and the esteem of men.

I. Early in life, feeling that God called him to the ecclesiastical state, he did all in his power to sanctify himself that he might better sanctify others. He goes deep into the recesses of his heart, studies every emotion of that heart, and, laying nature aside, he destroys all there is of man in him in order that all in him may be of God. And he had to overcome more than one obstacle before he acquired the virtue of meekness. In temper he was quick and fiery; noble by birth and surrounded with everything which draws the attention and applause of man and flatters self-esteem; with a tender and loving heart, and one which could be easily wounded . . . such was our saint. . . . What opposition he met with, when he declared that he would become a priest, that such was his determination. Under such trials it is not enough to be courageous, one must sometimes be cruel to himself: "*Per calcatum perge patrem, per calcatum perge matrem.*"—(St. Jerome.) Worse trials still were in store for him when he was appointed to the Chablais. The first time mention was made of such an appointment by his bishop, it struck terror into every heart, the undertaking seemed dangerous; yet Francis was the first to offer himself. And when this became known to the members of his family, how many objections they brought forth; they made use of every argument at their disposal, recrimination, even tears were not spared to move him, but all in vain. He heard all his loving father said when trying to dissuade him, but he heard more attentively what the Father in heaven said to his heart:

"*Go forth out of thy country and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's house, and come into the land which I shall show thee.*"—(Gen. xii: 1.) He was sensible to the sighs of his mother, who complained bitterly, but he was more sensible to the voice of Mother Church speaking to him in the words of the mother of Machabees: "*My son, have pity on me that bore thee nine months in my womb . . . and brought thee up unto this age.*"—(II. Mach. vii: 27.) Having made such a strong effort upon himself, his soul became all ablaze for the glory of God and the salvation of souls; having conquered nature, it will not cost him much to part with the things of this world.

II. Fondness for the goods of earth is not a thing uncommon, even amongst those who serve at the altar. Since the passion of money entered into the heart of an apostle, every priest must be on his guard. One who cares not for money may not be insensible to dignity. In the world people care for riches; in the ministry priests are apt to look for the highest places. St. Francis never knew such temptation; he always was perfectly disinterested. He became bishop of Geneva, but only through obedience. When offered the archiepiscopal see of Paris, he answered: "My bride is my Church; poor and desolate as she is, it would be a double sin for me to leave her for one richer and more flourishing." They thought of making him a cardinal, but he sternly refused. For himself he wants nothing; but he goes begging for his poor people. This is the way saints makes use of their credit with the rich of this world.

III. And that credit Francis never courted at the expense of his conscience; though anxious to please, he was yet more anxious to do good. A true servant of Christ, he looked not for favor with men. "*If I pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ.*" Henry IV. once said of him: "I reverence him because my favors never tempted him, and I love him because in his advice he never flattered me." He cared very little to provoke the feelings of the chief magistrates of Thonon: in spite of their opposition he built the first Church in the place, and restored Catholic worship in their midst. He never sided with the narrow-minded council of the king of Savoy, for in spite of all opposition he advised the sovereign to interdict heresy, and to dismiss his ministers. His meekness, therefore, was not accompanied with weakness: no, but it was the mainspring of his fortitude. A man who is truly mas-

ter of himself, uses in the fight, if needs be, all the nerve given him by nature as well as by the grace of God. And thus it happens that a good priest is never deterred from what he undertakes under the influence of true zeal.

2d Point. *Unchanging in the execution of what he had undertaken.* The saint was ready for any emergency. Difficulties, oppositions, persecutions, nothing was ever able to slacken the zeal of this apostle.

I. The mission of Chablais was a field on which much labor must be spent. He showed in his person the personification of the good shepherd of whom we read in the Gospel, that he goes after the stray sheep and takes it home upon his shoulders. His charity carries him to the roughest places where he can console some forlorn brother, or save a soul. He journeys through snow and storm, crosses rivers and climbs up rugged mountains. . . . Among the ruins of destroyed sacred edifices, he is seen addressing the little flock he has succeeded in gathering around him. If, at the sight of his immense work, one asks him to spare his health, his answer is that to him to live is to do the work of God ; he is like the husbandman, the heavier the burden the more contented he is. Always hearing confessions, or preaching the word of God, or traveling . . . he attends to everything, but he never stops to rest.

II. Oppositions. He met with some that were enough to discourage any one but himself. Heretics are not easily conquered ; they are slow to surrender, and, as a rule, they are sullen. Peter de Blois used to say : To convert a sinner is a great work ; to turn a heathen into a Christian is greater, but to convince a stubborn heretic is nothing less than a miracle. How great must have been the constancy of St. Francis' zeal, especially in the early days of his missionary life ; how many useless journeys, how many apparent failures ! . . . he has just rebuilt a church, a mob throws it down. He has just moved and convinced a a famous preacher,[1] and he sees him dying in his heresy. If he had done as so many of us would have done under similar difficulties, if he had said, there is nothing to do, what would have become of that unfortunate country ; would the evil have ever been checked ?

III. Persecutions. An attempt is made against his life, his repu-

1. Theodorus de Beze.

tation is assailed . . . for three years he is the victim of a base calumny. God, it is true, protected him ; yet how much he must have suffered under such a trial. Under all these trials the holy bishop never flinches ; he is always himself. All around him is in commotion, but nothing interferes with the tranquility of his pure soul . . . . He conquers all by his charity, he returns good for evil, and returns love for hatred . . . this is his revenge. Surely he was a model of meekness and fortitude.

Reflect now on yourself ; is your zeal truly active? When the glory of God or the salvation of souls requires it, do you trample under foot nature, riches, and the esteem of men? When at your work, are you persevering and patient? Do you combine, as our saint did, meekness and fortitude? At the holy altar, you feed on the flesh of the Lamb of God ; oh how meek in His immolation, and yet how strong, how loving. Ask Him to give you a share in these two virtues which were blended together in St. Francis de Sales.

1st Point. *Unswerving meekness in undertaking.* The saint was able to make any sacrifice—nature, goods of this world and the esteem of men. Nature . . . how many efforts he had to make in order to become truly meek . . . and in order to follow God's inspiration when flesh and blood raised a clamor. The goods of this world . . . those who care not for money sometimes look for dignity ; not so with Saint Francis, he cared only for God . . . the esteem of men . . . Henry IV. used to say : "I reverence him because my favors never tempted him, and I love him because in his advice he never flattered me."

2d Point. *Unchanging in the execution of what he had undertaken.* He knew how to bear with everything, work, opposition and persecution. There never was a harder mission than that of Chablais ; heretics he had to encounter, how often he met with apparent failure, but nothing could daunt or discourage him ; persecution he met. An attempt was made against his life, his reputation was assailed, and for three years he was the victim of base calumny . . . . he returned good for evil, love for hatred . . . was he not truly a model of both meekness and fortitude?

XXX. MEDITATION.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES—FRUITS OF HIS MEEKNESS.

1st.—FOR HIMSELF.

2d.—FOR THE CHURCH.

1st Point. *What were the fruits of St. Francis de Sales' meekness, for himself.* An eminent holiness, and the most precious consolations which the heart of a priest may desire.

I. As charity alone makes apostles, so it alone makes saints. If I have not charity, I have nothing, I am nothing: but if I possess this queen of virtues, all the law is accomplished, I am a saint. Love is the fulfilling of the Law. Now meekness is the flower of charity; it is the first virtue which we should learn at the school of Jesus Christ. "Learn of Me because I am meek." It merits for us the appellation of children of God. "Blessed are the peacemakers, because they shall be called the children of God," because it makes us His faithful images: *Nihil adeo vicinum Deo, conformemque facit quam ista virtus.*—(St. Chrys.) Perfect meekness is renouncement of all the passions, of the whole of oneself, since all of this is to be sacrificed to it. It is, therefore, the grave of all vices; it is also the cradle of virtues.

It communicates to us in particular three virtues which are, as it were, the essence of pastoral goodness, viz., patience, compassion and condescension: Patience to bear with the defects of our neighbors; compassion to feel their sorrows, and willingness to remedy them.

It is also an inexhaustible source of graces; because the soul which is free from agitation, is in an excellent disposition to pray well, and because its prayer is ever pleasing to God. "*The prayer of the meek has always pleased Thee.*"—(Judith ix: 16.) Moreover, the occasion to practice meekness is continual, for it demands continual watchfulness and mortification, so as to perceive and to repress every movement that would be contrary to it; hence comes a rich treasure of merits and multiplied claims to heavenly rewards.

Meekness is sacred love lifted up to heroism, a love which borrows greater ardor from the insults which we receive, from the persecutions or other evils which we have to bear. St. Francis de Sales used to say: "We should be glad to have our head among the thorns of repugnances, that our heart should be transfixed with the lance of contradictions. . . We must drink the gall, swallow the vinegar . . . . because God wishes it; and amidst all this we should preserve a meekness that will pass from the heart to the lips and the countenance."

What, then, is perfect meekness? It is nature perfectly subjected to grace; it is the life of faith, the life of God in us; it is consummated holiness. "*He sanctified him in his faith and meekness.*"—(Eccl. xlv : 4.) Behold the fruits of a virtue which all pronounce to be amiable, but of which the whole value and fecundity is very little known.

II. Even in this life, God rewarded the meekness of St. Francis de Sales by consolations proportionate to the efforts which it had cost him for its acquisition. A heart like his, knows not any greater happiness than that of making others happy, and for a zealous priest no joy can compare with that which he experiences by saving his flock. The nearer to hell his dear sheep would stray, the more would he rejoice upon seeing them return into the right road, and advance toward heaven. As much as the outrages offered to God, afflicted His heart, so much He is consoled by the homages which are rendered to Him. Great was the gratitude and wonder of St. Francis, when he saw the benediction which God poured down upon his labors and the miracles of grace He wrought through his ministry! How often did he not mingle his tears with the sweet tears of emotion of converted sinners! How sweet for his heart was the day on which Jesus Christ, concealed under the veil of the sacrament, re-entered in triumph the capital of a province whence He had been banished during seventy years. . . O priest, O pastor! of how many sacred, delightful joys you deprive yourself when you have no zeal, or when it is destitute of that meekness which imparts to it its efficacy!

2d Point. *Happy results of the meekness of St. Francis de Sales for the Church.* It honored the Church, extended its empire, and provided it with new spiritual means for the sanctification of her children.

I. The meekness of St. Francis gave honor to the Church, in the eyes of those who knew it less; we mean the men of the world and

heretics. The men of the world try to persuade themselves that Christian virtue is incompatible with the duties and proprieties of civil life; to them St. Francis showed, in his person, a life which was in almost entire conformity with the lawful usages of the world, united to a fervor worthy of the most beautiful ages of the Christian religion; in him they admired an illimited condescension and great delicacy of conscience,—the virtues which the Gospel requires, together with the qualities which the world esteems. . . . As for the heretics, they reproached the Catholic clergy with being greedy for money, ambitious, ostentatious; but in St. Francis they saw a man who, in order to become a clergyman, had sacrificed a large fortune, bright hopes, great dignities. It was known that out of obedience only, had St. Francis accepted the power to command; that from his entrance in the ministry, he deprived himself of everything, making himself poor in order to relieve the poor; that he was an enemy of splendor and display, journeying on foot to visit the villages of his diocese, teaching the simple people, catechising the children . . . his modesty, humility and meekness caused the prejudices of heretics to vanish away.

II. The meekness of St. Francis extended the empire of the Church. They reckon at 72,000 the number of heretics whom he brought back to its fold. Through the efforts of his zeal the whole of the Chablais and a considerable part of the diocese of Geneva returned to the Catholic religion. Now those conquests were due to the irresistible charm of his meekness. Heretics, says St. Augustine, are much more easily converted through acts of kindness than through disputes which excite dislike or anger. The kind Bishop of Geneva found no difficulty in convincing those stray souls that he loved them, and that he vividly deplored their misfortune. . . . He knew how to touch their hearts, and they returned to the faith.

III. Finally, the writings of St. Francis, and the new order which he founded, have enriched the Church with new means of sanctification for her children. Francis is ever living in his precious works, wherein everything breathes peace, confidence, and heavenly charity. They are at the same time solid and full of unction; they show perfection to consist in the discharge of the most common duties of Christian life, and they establish its necessity upon the most pressing of all motives, viz.: the love of God and the love of Jesus Christ.

Charity also it was which inspired in him the idea of founding the visitation order, an asylum offered to so many Christian virgins, who if not for it, would have remained in the world through want of a chance to leave it, because the feebleness of their body did not correspond with their spiritual fervor. Thus it has come to pass that St. Francis, through the charms of his meekness, still continues his apostolic mission; he enlightens, he consoles, he edifies.

As you desire to adorn your soul with a virtue which gains for us the love of God and of men, try to find which one of your inclinations is the most opposed to it, and in what occasion it is that you more frequently sin against meekness. Fight courageously, foresee the occasion, but above all pray with fervor.

"*O Domine, quia ipsa bonitas es et mausuetudo! ostende mihi faciem tuam; videam clementiam frontis tuæ, dulcedinem oculorum tuorum, suavitatem labiorum tuorum, benignitatem manuum tuarum, pulchritudinem gressuum tuorum; et super hæc, eminentem caritatem cordistui. Habeam te præ oculis semper, ut infinita amabilitate tua captus, mansuetudinem tuam induere studeam et imitari.*"—(Memorial. vit. sacred, c. 46.)

1st Point. *Fruits of the meekness of St. Francis de Sales for himself.* An eminent holiness; the most precious consolations which a priest's heart may desire. Meekness is the flower of charity, and if I have charity, I accomplish the whole law, I am a saint. Meekness communicates to us in particular the virtues of patience, condescension and compassion, which form, as it were, the essence of pastoral goodness. It is an excellent disposition to pray well, and the good prayer draws upon us all the graces. Perfect meekness means nature perfectly subjected to grace; it is the life of God in us; it is consummated holiness—God rewards it even on earth by consolations proportionate to the efforts which its acquisition has cost. This we saw realized in St. Francis de Sales; the nearer had his dear sheep gone to the abyss, the more did he rejoice to see them return and direct their course to heaven.

2d Point. *Beneficial results of St. Francis' meekness for the whole Church.* The meekness of our saint honored the Church by causing it to be known by those who had most need to know it, we mean the

Christians given up to the spirit of the world, and the heretics.—The kind charity of St. Francis de Sales also extended the empire of the Church through the conversion of so many heretics, the composition of many excellent works, and the foundation of an edifying order of religion. Through the charms of that meekness which we breathe in his writings, and the piety of souls instructed at his schools, St. Francis still continues his apostolic mission in the Church.

SECTION TWO.

LENT AND PASCHAL TIME.

PROPER OF TIME.

The Church sets apart forty days for recollection and penance as a preparation for the great festival of Easter. This holy custom is the most powerful means employed by the Church for reviving the sentiment of their vocation in the hearts of the faithful. It is quite important that they should profit by those days of grace for the renovation of their spiritual life. It was, therefore, proper that the faithful should be prepared for this time of salvation, which is itself a preparation, so that, the voices of the world dying out by degrees in their souls, they might give more attention to the solemn warning of Ash Wednesday.—(D. Gueranger, *Annee liturg.*)

The three Sundays which precede Lent are named *Septuagesima*, *Sexagesima and Quinquagesima*, because they are the seventh, the sixth and the fifth before that of the Passion. "The first Sunday of Lent being called *Quadeagesima*, because it is the first of the quarantine. They who began their fast eight days earlier, named *quinquagesima*, the Sunday on which the fast began ; by the same reason they who began their fast on either of the two preceding Sundays, named the one *sexagesima* and the other *septuagesima*, by going backwards in each case."—(Bergier, Dict. Theol.) Those three weeks are, therefore, as the prelude to the holy sorrows and to the tears of repentance, which will purify us, and will prepare us to worthily celebrate our resurrection, that is, our passage to a more holy and blessed life. We make an experiment of our ability for penance, in order to undertake it courageously, when the Church will give the signal.

XXXI. MEDITATION.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY—PARABLE OF THE LABORERS SENT INTO THE VINEYARD.

"THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS LIKE TO AN HOUSE-HOLDER, WHO WENT OUT EARLY IN THE MORNING TO HIRE LABORERS INTO HIS VINEYARD."—(Mat. xx : 1.)

1st.—ALL MEN ARE CALLED TO CULTIVATE THE VINEYARD OF THEIR SOUL.

2d.—TO HIS FIRST CULTURE, THE PRIESTS SHOULD ADD THAT OF THE CHURCH.

3d.—WHEN, AND IN WHAT MANNER, SHALL THE LABOR BE REWARDED.

1st Point. *All men are called to cultivate the vineyard of their soul.* God is the house-holder who goes out early in the morning to seek for laborers on the public square amidst the cares, the affairs and pleasures of the world. In whatever place we may happen to be, He urges us by His grace to labor for our sanctification, by employing in His service all the faculties which we receive from His goodness. *Vinea est anima cuique excolenda. Quæ facit vinitor in vinea, hæc faciat fidelis in anima.*—(Cornel., *in Matth.*, xx.) If I apply my intelligence to know God, my memory to remember His blessings, my heart to love Him; if I am faithful to find out, and fight against my defects, to regret my falls. . . . I cultivate the vineyard of my soul, and make it fruitful in works of holiness. *Revirescit anima tanquam vinea per flores et folia, id est, per sancta desideria et sermonem ædificantem. Producit lacrymas compunctionis, emittit odorem virtutis, juxta illud Canticorum Vineæ florentes dederunt odorem suum; edit maturas uvas bonorum operum.*—(Ibid.) This vineyard is the Lord's; this vineyard

He planted, and He watches over it; His accidental glory is the rent He requires from it; but His essential glory does not depend on us; and He in reality hires us for a work of which all the profit is ours. The price of our day's work will be the rich reward of heavenly happiness: "*having agreed with the laborers for a penny a day.*" This day's work is life; we owe the whole day to Him whom we are bound always to serve. What is a day's labor for an eternity of rest? The Master sends the laborers at different hours, to signify the different times in life at which men give themselves to God by yielding to the action of grace.

O priest of God, was there ever a vineyard chosen, guarded, cared for, as your soul is? Has it brought forth everything that the good Master had a right to expect? Is it not to you that He says: "*I planted thee a chosen vineyard with all good seed. How then art thou turned unto Me, into that which is of nothing worth? O strange vineyard.*"—(Jer. ii: 21.) "*What is there that I ought to do to My vineyard, that I have not done to it? Was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it hath brought forth wild grapes?*"—(Is. v: 4.) He deigned to call you to Him from your childhood. There had been nothing wanting to your clerical education, and all the time of your preparation for the priesthood, was a continual and pressing invitation to get rid of worldly feelings to unite you to God. How often, since you became a priest, did He not inspire you with the thoughts of giving yourself to Him more perfectly? Does not the thought present itself to your mind at this very moment? Does it not act upon your heart? What will you do? Which hour of the day is it for you? You may have reached the last one.

2d Point. *To the culture of their soul, the priests should add the culture of the Church.* If one only soul has so much value in the eyes of Jesus Christ, that He is disposed to give for it His bloody sweat, His tears, what will not be His solicitude for the Church, which is the assembly of all the souls which belong to Him by faith? Hear the prophets, and the Gospel itself, speaking of His affection for the mystical vine. "*My beloved had a vineyard on a hill, on a fruitful place . . . and he fenced it in . . . and planted it with the choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst thereof, and set up a wine press therein.*"—(Is. v: 1, 2.) "*There was a man, a house-holder, who*

planted a vineyard, and made a hedge round about it, and dug in it a press, and built a tower."—(Mat. 21 : 33.) The Son of God, through His incarnation and other mysteries, came Himself to plant this vineyard, with many painful labors. He hedged it with His law ; His angels and His ministers He appointed to watch over it ; the tower, which He built in it, means the perpetual assistance which preserves it from every error. This Church of Jesus Christ, is also under the protection of Mary. "*The tower of David which is built with bulwarks, a thousand bucklers hang upon it.*"—(C. Cant., iv : 4.)

Congratulate yourself, O priest of God, for having been sent to this vineyard, being called to succeed so many indefatigable laborers, who made it bring forth such admirable fruits. "*Go you also into my vineyard.*" "Be not," says St. Bernard, "one of those churchmen who have found the secret of separating that which is painful in their condition, from that which is agreeable and easy :" *Advertere est prudentiam aliquorum, et mirari quemadmodum novo inter hæc artificio discernentes . . . totum quod delectat eligunt et amplectuntur, quod molestum est fugiunt atque declinant. Sudant agricolæ, putant et fodiunt vinitores, et clerici inter hæc torpent otio, vivunt tritico, bibunt uvæ sanguinem meracissimum : parum est, impinguantur et dilatantur adipe frumenti . . . madent deliciis otiosi.*—(Tract de Morib. cleric.) When pastors have adopted this injurious system, God's vineyard has to suffer, not only from their neglect of cultivation, but also from the scandals by which they lay it waste. Then the desolation has come to pass which was described by the prophet Jeremias. "*Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have changed my delightful portion into a desolate wilderness. They have laid it waste . . . with desolation is all the land made desolate, because there is none that considereth in the heart.*"—(Jer. xii : 11, 12.) In order to avoid so many crimes and misfortunes, we should often think on the evening of the day.

3d Point. *When and in what manner will the work of the laborers be rewarded?* "*When evening was come.*" Evening is the end of our life. Ah ! how rapidly it comes on ! One hour more, perhaps, and all the time to work shall have ended ; nothing more to be done save to receive its reward. Now, so great will be the recompense of the apostles, and of the other evangelical laborers, that the other laborers, says St.

John Chrysostom, would be jealous, if it were possible for jealousy to enter the heart of the elect: "*Per murmur significatur mercedis et gloriæ magnitudo, quæ tanta est in apostolis, ut cæteri electi et beati eis inviderent et murmurarent, si invidia et murmur in beatos cadere posset.*"—(Corn. Ib.)

What shall be the measure of this recompense, which shall be admirable for all, but yet proportioned to merit? It shall not be exactly the duration of the work, for the laborers of the eleventh hour shall receive an equal salary with those who shall have labored the whole day. This measure will be the grace of God, and co-operation therewith: "*Majus meritum facit major, non labor, sed gratia, et gratiæ cooperatio.*"—(Ib.) I deserve more, by doing works less considerable in themselves, if I perform them with greater love. "*Disce hic praxim facilem augendi merita et gloriam, esse, si quis crebro exerceat actus charitatis, eosque ardentes et intensos.*"—(Ibid.)

Hence the conclusion of the parable, "*so shall the last be first, and the first last.*" We have here a powerful motive to stimulate those who are to make up for lost time; an instant of fervor can blot out stains, and compensate for the losses of an inveterate lukewarmness: "*Subitus calor longum vincit teporem.*"—(St. Hier. Ep. 34, ad Juli.) This is for us a pressing motive, ever to remain humble, and not to despise any person; this new penitent is perhaps more fervent than I am; the great sinner may be converted and become a great saint, as I may perhaps go astray and may become a great reprobate, "*for many are called, and few are chosen.*" Many are called to a state of perfection, but few are they who respond to this call; many are called to lead a penitent life, but few are they who follow it, at least perseveringly; many are called to the practice of meditation and contemplation, but few are they who care to enter and advance in these holy ways; many are called to go to heaven, but alas! few there are who reach that destination, because they either neglect or refuse to employ the means which would lead them thither.

O my God, I discover within me resolutions, holy desires, inspirations of Thy grace; but when are these works really good which shall secure my salvation?—(II. Pet. i: 10.) Be Thou blessed for the mercy wherewith Thou callest me again, when the day is about ending. Henceforth, at least, I will not lose a moment. When very soon, being

on the altar, and holding Jesus in my hand. I shall say to Thee, and now already I say, *Per ipsum, cum ipso et in ipso:* Through this well beloved Son of thine, with Him and in Him, receive Thy unworthy servant; grant that henceforth my life may be wholly absorbed in Thee, and that I may honor the sacrifice of Jesus, in accomplishing mine in the works of the ministry, in the tears of repentance, of gratitude and of love.

1st Point. *All men are called to cultivate the vine of their soul.* God is the house-holder. He wishes to cultivate our soul by applying to His service our memory and our will. This soul is the Lord's vineyard; He has planted and He cares for it. . . . This day's work represents life; this day's hire shall be life everlasting. O my God, great are the cares thou hast hitherto bestowed upon my soul. Has it brought forth the fruits of holiness Thou hast a right to expect?

2d Point. *To the culture of their soul, the priests should add the culture of the Church.* They know how dearly God loves this mystical vineyard, of this love we have the evidence in the incarnation and the other mysteries of Jesus Christ. How glorious for me to be employed in the sanctification of the Church! In accepting the honor annexed to this admirable vocation, I must accept the labor which it demands. For the encouragement of this purpose, I will often think on the end of the day's work.

3d Point. *When and in what manner shall the laborer be rewarded?* The evening is the end of life! One hour more perhaps, and my salary will be given me. For the good priest, this reward will be so great, that the other elect would be jealous, if jealousy would be possible in heaven. It shall be measured more according to the perfection of charity, than according to the duration of the work. Here is a powerful incentive for those who have to make up for lost time. It is also a pressing motive not to prefer ourselves to any one. This new penitent, who is just beginning, is perhaps already more advanced than I am.

XXXII. MEDITATION.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY—THE SEED IS THE WORD OF GOD.

1st.—THE GOOD THOUGHT IS A SEED WHICH JESUS CHRIST SOWS IN OUR SOULS.

2d.—THE WORD OF GOD IS A SEED WHICH, THROUGH US, HE SOWS IN THE SOULS OF OUR BRETHREN.

3d.—WHY DOES THIS TWO-FOLD SEED, SO FRUITFUL IN ITSELF, REMAIN UNFRUITFUL?

1st Point. *The good thought is a seed which the Savior sows in our souls.* God speaks to men in as many different ways as He uses to communicate Himself to them. The inspiration or good thought is one of the most ordinary ways of those communications of God to man. All the designs of our Savior may be reduced to three: To make saints on earth; to send souls to heaven; to procure the glory of God through the virtues of the former and the happiness of the latter. To execute this plan so worthy of Him, He chiefly uses a good thought, which is an interior word, a Divine seed, containing the germ of all the blessings which His love has destined for us in time and in eternity.

The first object intended by the Son of God in coming into this world was to restore the glory of God, and to institute the true worship of His majesty. For this object He inspires us with good thoughts. It is this that enables us to know, to love and serve God, and establish His reign in our hearts. For I can neither know nor love God if He reveal not Himself to my intellect and to my heart. When He wishes me to glorify His infinite wisdom, He opens to my mind the secrets of His Providence, the great designs He has concerning me, the admirable means by which He governs me.

When He wishes that I should fear His justice, He unveils for me the evil and malice of sin, places under my eyes, as He did for the

woman of Samaria, the crimes which I committed, and at this sight I acknowledge that I deserve His chastisements.

The same should be said of the other two ends of His incarnation, which were to sanctify men on earth and to send souls to heaven. For this purpose He chiefly employs good thoughts. To this interior word, which is heard in the sanctuary of the soul, we must apply what St. Ambrose says of the word of God in general: *Mundat, illuminat, accendit audientes.* It converts and purifies sinners by inspiring them with the hatred of sin. "*The law of God is unspotted converting souls.*"—(Ps. xviii.) It enlightens the just and directs them in the way of precepts and of counsels. "*Thy word is a lamp to my feet.*"—(Ps. cxviii: 105.) It enlightens the perfect and unites them intimately to God. "*Thy word is exceedingly refined.*"—(Ib. 140.) Such is the sanctification of man, the secret of his predestination. Final perseverance which completes the work of salvation comes from Divine grace, which rewards a good life by a good death; but whence comes a good life if not from good works, and good works originate in good desires, which themselves have no other source but the good thoughts of the mind? A good thought is, therefore, the first spring of all merits, the root of all the virtues which make us friends of God, the principle of all our sanctity. Art thou fully convinced, O my soul, that without it there would be no perfect faith among the faithful no purity for the virgins, no charity among the just? A good thought or inspiration filled the desert with penitents, the dungeons with martyrs, the Church of God with saints on earth, and the kingdom of heaven with innumerable elect. If such is thy belief, why dost thou receive it so coldly when Jesus Christ suggests it to thee? How is it that thou hast so little fear of stifling it amongst so many vain and useless thoughts? Knowest thou not that from either the good or bad use thou wilt make of this inspiration, may depend for thee an eternity of delights or an eternity of torments?

2d Point. *The word of God is a seed which Jesus Christ sows in the souls of others through our ministry.* Every time we instruct, whatever may be the mode of instruction . . . it is always the Savior sowing the field of His Church. "*The sower went out to sow his seed.*" Every word of this Gospel is to be considered. The sower *went out*, Jesus came forth from the bosom of His Father. "He came into the

world to give testimony to the truth."—(J. xvi.) His mission was to preach. "*He sent me to preach the Gospel to the poor.*"—(L. iv. 18.) He is pre-eminently the *sower:* "*Satorem istum nullum melius quam Filium Dei intelligere possumus, qui de sinu Patris . . . egrediens, ad hoc venit, ut testimonium perhiberet veritati.*"—(Bed. Comm. in Luc.) However, though He comes from the Father in order to draw nearer unto us, He says no other words than those which He heard of Him.—(J. xv: 15.) He is ever in the Father, and the Father ever in Him.—(J. xiv: 11.) Here we have an important lesson for sacred orators. They should come forth from God, that is, not simply be sent by Him, but they should not speak to men except after conversing with God. They should live in constant, intimate union with Him. *He who sows,* not he who sowed, or they who sow. What He did during three years Himself, He does now through His ministers. It is He also who preaches, as it is He who baptizes: "*In discipulo magister auditur.*"—(Bed. Ib.) Your glory, O priest of God, consists in being employed by Him as His organ, your duty is to show yourself worthy of so great an honor. The time is drawing near on which you will fulfill more assiduously the admirable ministry of preaching the Word of God, prepare yourself to faithfully co-operate with the zeal of the Savior. *To sow His seed.* It is His own word which Jesus sows; He borrows it from none else, He himself being the Word of the living God: "*Non accipit verbum quasi mutuatum, cum ipse naturaliter sit Verbum Dei.*"—(Cat. aur.) From Him we should receive it; in Him we should procure it through meditation and the study of the Holy Scriptures. Let us never ascend the pulpit without praying Him to bless His word in our mouth, and let us disown every human view in the discharge of so Divine a duty.

The Savior in this parable warns his priests against two very hurtful temptations, viz: Discouragement when they do not succeed; vanity in case that they do obtain success. When our labors are apparently fruitless, we are tempted to say: "I am losing my time, they profit so little by my exhortations!" . . . But you lose not your time when you prepare for God a full justification against the day of His judgment, and reduce the sinner to remain without excuse. Does Jesus Christ cease to sow the seed of His holy word, though He foresees that more than the half of it will yield no fruit, owing to the bad soil

upon which it falls? "*Discipulos erudit, ut, etsi plures audientium fuerint, qui pereant, non propter hoc Dominus, qui omnia prævidit, destitit a seminando.*"—(St. Chrys. Hom. 45 in Mat.) If, on the contrary, our instructions produce abundant fruits, why should we glory on that account? Let us thank Him who had prepared hearts and caused the Divine seed to spring up.

3d Point. *How is it that a seed so fruitful in itself brings forth no fruit in our soul and in those of our brethren?* The word of God, either interior or exterior, has as much power to sanctify us as it had to create the world out of nothing; but of those who hear and those who announce it, it demands dispositions which are too often wanting.

I. Three things, says St. Thomas, are necessary for him who hears the word of God. He should preserve it in his memory, allow it to penetrate into his heart, and direct his will so as to follow its impulse: "*Hæc tria requiruntur: memoria, amor, sollicitudo.* Now this is what is wanting to us: "*Hæc tria per tria tolluntur: memoria per vanitatem, amor per duritiam, sollicitudo per germinationem vitiorum.*"—(St. Th. Expos. in Mat.) Our soul is like unto a highway, open to all travellers; truth is rejected by vanity, and good thoughts by frivolous notions. Hardly has the holy seed fallen upon it, but the devil destroys it through the disposition of mind which he imparts. Lo, this soul is like unto stony ground, virtue cannot sink roots in it; though some passing sentiments of devotion appear occasionally on the surface, the heart remains hardened, insensible to spiritual concerns. Or it may be a ground wasted by the thorns which it brings forth where vices stifle the growth of virtues; the cares of time cause the *only one thing necessary* to be forgotten, and yet the Master said: "*Seek first the kingdom of God.*" O Jesus, give me a calm recollected mind which retains Thy word, an attentive soul which considers it, and is free from every passion which might prevent its full fruition.

II. As to the word which we announce, we know its power from the known holiness of its evangelist. We learn from the epistle of this day at what price St. Paul purchased the success of his apostolate: "*In many more labors, in prisons more frequently, in stripes above measure, in death often. Of the Jews, five times did I receive forty stripes less one.*" Thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned,

thrice I suffered shipwreck. . . . "*In labors and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.*"—(II. Cor. xi.) Have compassion on Thy ministers, O Lord, through the compassion Thou hast on so many unfortunate souls which only have need of holy priests to put an end to their wanderings. to return to Thee and be saved.

1st Point. *A good thought is a seed which the Savior sows in our souls.* All the designs of Jesus Christ are three: To glorify God, to sanctify souls on earth, to prepare elect for heaven. To accomplish these ends, He employs chiefly good thoughts. I cannot glorify God by knowing and loving Him, unless He reveals Himself to my intellect and to my heart. He does this through good thoughts, which manifest to me His greatness, His power, His holiness, all His infinite perfections. . . . The same should be said of the other ends of the incarnation, which are to sanctify men on earth, and guarantee their happiness in heaven. A good thought converts sinners, enlightens and directs the just, confirms the perfect. . . . From one good thought, according to its good or bad use, may depend my eternal lot. In vain does Jesus speak to thee, poor Samaritan, if thou wilt not listen and follow the light He imparts to thee.

2d Point. *The word of God is a seed which the Savior sows through us in the souls of our brethren.* It is Jesus Christ, however, who sows the field of His Church. "*The sower went out to sow his seed.*" Every one of these words is to be considered. Jesus came forth from the bosom of His Father. His mission was to preach. He is ever, nevertheless, in the bosom of His Father. The preacher must come from God, and yet abide in God. It is God's word which we announce and which He proclaims through our organ. You must never, therefore, give way to discouragement if the Divine seed appears to remain fruitless; neither should you yield to vanity in your own mind, if it bear abundant fruit.

3d Point. *How is it that a seed, so fruitful of itself, remains fruitless in our souls and in that of our brethren.* Three things are necessary who receives this Divine seed; he should keep it in his memory, allow it to penetrate into his heart, and submit his will to its dictates. We know not how to keep our good thoughts; we lose them through dissipation

of mind. Truth does not sink deep into our hearts on account of their hardness ; if it produce some light impressions, our will refuses to take energetic resolutions. The word of God meets with the same obstacles in those who announce it ; but let us not forget that it derives much power from the well-known holiness of the preacher.

XXXIII. MEDITATION.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY—CONDUCT OF THE GOOD PRIEST DURING THE DAYS OF DISSIPATION WHICH PRECEDE THE OPENING OF THE LENTEN FAST.

1st.—HE MAKES THEM DAYS OF RECOLLECTION, OF PRAYER AND PENANCE TO HIMSELF.

2d.—HE DISPLAYS DURING THEM GREATER ZEAL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD AND THE SALVATION OF SOULS.

1st Point. *Days of recollection, of prayer and penance.* For the men of the world these are days of dissipation, of foolish joy, of revolt against God. One would say that all the powers of hell are let loose, that all flesh has corrupted its way as in the days before the flood. Reason seems to have disappeared as well as faith. Jesus in the Gospel of to-day speaks of the reproaches and sufferings He will soon undergo in Jerusalem. "*Behold we go up to Jerusalem.*" *He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, mocked, scourged, spit upon, and put to death.* . . . . The good Master announces this event to His disciples. . . . Alas, they do not respond by their wailings and tears. During the carnival we hear nothing but dissolute songs, we see naught but incentive to excesses. . . . The love of pleasures takes hold of the minds of people, excites their imagination. . . .Those very persons who act as Christians at other times, act on these days as if they were pagans. Where is fidelity to the good Master? Is it by crucifying Thee anew in their hearts, that they prepare themselves to honor the mystery of Thy death?

Is intemperance a fit preparation for fasting, or lamentable outrages a proper prelude to the supplications of penitents?

A good priest in these unhappy days shuns everything that savors of worldly life. What a scandal it were if his example would in some way sanction what the Church condemns? Not only does he abstain from the gross pleasures of the table, and of those diversions which are most detrimental to the soul, as they are the most pleasing to the senses, but he lives in retirement as far as he can, that he may not witness disorders which he cannot prevent, and that he may more assiduously pay court to the Divine King who is forgotten in these days. "*Lo, I have gone far off, flying away, and I abode in the wilderness . . . . for I have seen iniquities and contradictions in the city.*"—(Ps. liv: 8, 10.) His sentiments are those of St. Augustine, who said: *Bibant alii mortiferas voluptates; portio calicis mei Dominus est.* He does penance, he prays for so many unfortunate persons who provoke the anger of the Lord. "*Howl, ye shepherds, and cry.*"—(Jer. xxv: 34.) "*O ye priests. Howl, ye ministers of the altar.*"—(Joel i: 13.)

2d Point. *He displays greater zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.* We are the friends of Jesus. This is the name He deigns to give us. "*I have called you friends.*" We do not deserve the title if we have no zeal for His honor; and we certainly do not possess this spirit of zeal if we do not regret keenly the outrages heaped upon Him. "*The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon me.*"—(Ps. lxviii: 10.) Friendship makes everything mutual between hearts which it unites. Let us, as often as we can, go and kneel at the foot of the altar, and console our adorable friend. Did He perchance see any of His ministers among the ungrateful souls present to His mind when He said: "*My heart has expected reproach and misery, and I looked for one that would grieve together with Me, but there was none.*"—(Ib. 21.) Were He to ask them to-day what He had asked His apostles, "*Will you also go away?*" is there one who would not answer with Peter: "*Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life?*"—(J. vi: 68, 69) With the help of Thy grace, O Lord, we shall be with Thee constantly, participating in the bitter sorrows of Thy heart. "*You are they who have continued with Me in My temptations, and I dispose to you as My Father has disposed to Me, a kingdom.*"—(Luc. xxii: 28, 29.)

But the great consolation which Jesus expects of His good priests is to see them hurrying to the rescue of those deluded people, who, in offending Him, rush on toward damnation. The more sin abounds, the more does the man of God strengthen Himself to fight against it; his inactivity is never more criminal than when souls are in greater danger of being lost; but now in these unhappy days, do they not fall as fast into hell as the leaves of autumn shaken by the storm? Let us redouble our charity, since the devil redoubles his fury. Let us employ admonitions, instructions, religious displays, everything in our power to excite the faithful to fervor, and to stem the torrent of evil, or at least to diminish its devastations. The Scripture says of Josias: "*In the days of sinners he strengthened godliness.*"—(Eccl. xlix: 4.) What did you do hitherto, what will you do hereafter to deserve the same praise?

In preparing for Mass, offer amends to our Lord Jesus Christ for all the abominations He beholds from His throne in your Churches. Unite yourself to the pious souls which frequently visit Him during the Forty Hours, and offer to Him all the sentiments of adoration, of gratitude, of tender and generous love, which his presence in the Eucharist inspired to the saints.

1st Point. *Days of recollection, of penance and prayer.* For the people in the world, these are days of dissipation, of foolish amusements, of sin. A good priest shuns carefully whatever might savor of a worldly life: *Bibant alii mortiferas voluptates; portio calicis mei Dominus est.* He does penance for so many unfortunate sinners who provoke the anger of God.

2d Point. *He is more zealous than usual to procure the glory of God and the salvation of souls.* The priest is the friend of God. He should feel keenly the outrages offered to Him. "*The reproaches of them that reproached Thee, are fallen upon me.*" But the great consolation he procures to our Savior, is by rushing to the rescue of those that are being lost. He redoubles his zeal, as the devil redoubles his fury. He neglects nothing in his power to struggle against scandals and excite the fervor of the faithful.

XXXIV. MEDITATION.

MONDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA—THE SUFFERINGS AND DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST.

When one meditates deeply upon this mystery, applying thereto his mind and his heart, he finds in this meditation the beginning and consummation of true happiness, viz. :—

1st.—THE FEAR WHICH PRESERVES US FROM SIN.

2d.—THE LOVE WHICH UNITES US TO GOD.

1st Point. *The meditation of the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ imparts to us the fear which preserves us from sin.*

I. If I consult my faith regarding the dignity of the victim, it reveals to me under the appearances of a slave, a God of infinite majesty. Jesus is the *splendor of the eternal light.* God the Father acknowledged him to be His *well-beloved Son;* the heavens, the earth, the angels, the devils, the rocks reddened with His blood, and the executioners who crucified Him, render testimony to His divinity. But, exclaims St. Bernard, can it be that He is in reality the Almighty God who succumbs under the efforts of His enemies? Is this man who expires on an infamous gibbet the Master of life, is He the Lord of the Universe? *Ergone credendum est quod iste sit Deus, qui flagellatur, qui conspuitur, qui crucifigitur?* Thou believest it, O my soul, and thou adorest this crucified God. The blows of God offended by sin, do then fall upon one who is God, and this penitent God bears the resemblance of sin. Thy prophet, O Lord, rightly exclaimed : "*Who knoweth the power of Thy anger.*"—(Ps. lxxxix : 11.) And St. Paul presents to us Thy cross as the great manifestation of Thy justice. "*Whom God has proposed to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to the showing of His justice.*" —(Rom. iii : 25.) Who shall be spared if Thy Son cannot be spared? When I behold Thee dying on Calvary, methinks I hear Thee saying through all Thy sores as through so many mouths : "O you blind men,

you know not whom you ought to fear. I shall teach it to you. I will show you whom you shall fear; fear Him who lifted His mighty arm against His well-beloved Son Himself, and would not be appeased save by My blood." "*Yea, I say to you, fear Him.*" This I say to all; I say it to you, My apostles and friends.

II. What are the sufferings of this Lamb of God, who is sanctity itself? Hear Him foretell the reproaches and torments which are in store for Him. "*He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and scourged and spit upon; they will put Him to death.*"—(L. xviii.) Behold a summary of His passion. He shall be delivered. By one of His disciples He is delivered into the hands of His enemies; by the Jews He is delivered to Pilate, by Pilate to the executioners; by His Father and by Himself He is given up to all sorts of outrages and sufferings. "*He gave Himself up for me.*" Interiorly He suffers mortal sorrow, cruel agony, rejection by God and man. . . . Exteriorly He is despoiled of all; they cast lots upon His garments, His honor is destroyed; hear the insults and mockeries. He is not a man, He is the reproach of men. Consider His body. "*From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, there is no soundness in Him.*"

That Divine body is nothing but wounds, bruises and angry sores. —(Ib.) His head is covered with thorns, His face bruised and covered with spits, His eyes filled with blood and tears, His arms bound with cords, His hands and feet afterward pierced with nails. . . . O man of sorrow, in this wise it is that Thy Father punishes in Thee sins which Thou couldst not have comitted. What chastisement does he deserve who has committed them? What shall become of the sinners when Jesus Christ, having become their judge, will compare their so-called penance with that which He performed for them in His passion? O sacred cross, thou art my hope now; be not at that hour the subject of my fear. Let them tremble in the day of affliction who have been Thy enemies; but I will profit by Thy graces, and shall find in Thee my salvation and my rest. "*Be not Thou a terror unto me, Thou art my hope on the day of affliction. . . . let them be afraid, and let not me be afraid.*"—(Jer. xvii: 17, 18.)

2d Point. *The sufferings and death of Jesus Christ suggest more love than fear.* St. Bernard, wholly absorbed in the contemplation of this mystery, cried out in tears: "*Quis hæc omnia fecit? Amor.*" It

was assuredly the love of God toward men which was the mainspring of that drama, at the same time so appalling and so consoling. Love conceived the thought, God executed the plan. God did all that I see in the garden of Olives, in the palace of Herod, in the pretorium, on Calvary . . . And what other end did so loving a God propose to Himself, but to be beloved by us, and thereby to sanctify and to save us? Where, indeed, is the man, says that holy doctor, who would not be moved, though his heart was as hard as stone, by the consideration of this mystery: *Cujus vel saxeum pectus tanta et talis a tali et tanto collata mulititudo beneficiorum non emolliat?* We remember Him who was made a curse for us, that He might redeem us from the curse of the law (Gal. iii.) Who laid down His life to give for us eternal life; how could we but exclaim with St. Paul: "*The charity of Christ urges us?*" Shall we not subscribe to the anathema He pronounces against a soul which is ungrateful enough to resist the charms of a goodness so touching and generous? "*If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema.*"—(I Cor. xvi: 22.) How can we but answer, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee," to a Savior who says to me: "*Intellige, fili; dilexi te, et tradidi memetipsum pro te: me creatorem pro te creatura, me patrem prote prodigo filio, me Deum pro te homuncione, me offensum pro te offendente, me benefactorem pro te ingrato, me summe beatum pro te miserrimo?*"—(Mem. vit. sac. c. 19.) Let us, therefore, with all our heart, with all our soul, love Him who deigned to suffer for us: *Clamant vulnera, et super omnia clamat amor, ut toto corde totisque visceribus diligatur, qui pro dilectione tanta et talia perferre dignatus est.*

Cross of my Savior, blood of my God, whilst you teach me how great was His love of me, you reproach me with the weakness of my love of Him. Achieve Thy conquest, O my crucified Savior! Secure for Thyself a heart which I find ready to escape from Thee at the very time it protests that it will adhere to Thee irrevocably. Grant that the consideration of Thy sufferings may inspire me with the fear of committing sin, which is the sovereign evil, and the love which unites me to Thee who art the sovereign good. May I fear Thee, May I love Thee. But let my love be stronger in me than fear. I will fear Thee only in loving Thee, and in order to love Thee forever. In this wise I shall find in the meditation of Thy cross, all that is useful and necessary

for my sanctification: "*Qui se intente et devote in sanctissima Passione Domini exercet, omnia utilia et necessaria sibi abundanter ibi invenit.*"—(St. Bon.) "*Nihil tam salutiferum est quam quotidie cogitare quanta pro nobis pertulit Deus homo.*"—(St. Aug.) "*Hæc meditari dixi sapientiam; in his justitiæ mihi perfectionem constitui; hæc mea sublimior philosophia, scire Sesum, et hunc crucifixum.*"—(St. Bern., ser. 43 in Cant.)

1st Point. *The meditation of the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ* imparts to us the fear which preserves us from committing sin, because we see how severely God punishes it. I. Who is He who suffers? Under the form of a slave I discover in Him the supreme majesty. Is He really the Master of life who expires on an infamous gibbet? Thou believest it, O my soul, and thou adorest this God crucified. . . The mighty blows of God offended by sin do then fall upon one who is God. Who shall be spared if the Son of God be not? II. What are the sufferings of this Lamb of God, who is sanctity itself? Interiorly, mortal sorrow, rejection by God and man. . . . Exteriorly, naught but wounds, bruises and swollen sores. His head, His face, His eyes, His arms, His hands, His feet, all in Him suffers pain. . . . O Jesus, how shall it be with me, when Thou shalt oppose the little amount of my penance, to the rigor of the one Thou didst perform for me?

2d Point. *The sufferings and death of Jesus Christ suggest to us more love than fear.* The love of God for us was the great spring of that drama so appalling and consoling. What other object did that loving God propose to Himself except our love, and in this manner to save our souls? Should we not exclaim with St. Paul: "*The charity of Jesus Christ urges us?*" Shall we not cry out with him: "*If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ let him be anathema?*"

XXXV. MEDITATION.

TUESDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA—CURE OF THE BLIND MAN OF JERICHO—CONTEMPLATION.

1st.—CONTEMPLATE THE PERSONS CONCERNED.

2d.—HEAR THEIR WORDS.

3d.—CONSIDER THEIR ACTIONS.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Jesus while on His way to Jerusalem foretold His passion to His disciples: "*Now it came to pass that when He drew near to Jericho (which city He should pass to go to Jerusalem), that a certain blind man sat by the way begging. And when He heard the multitude passing by, he asked what this meant, and they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by; and he cried out saying: Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. And they that went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried out much more: Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus standing, commanded him to be brought unto Him. And when he was come near, He asked Him, saying: What wilt thou that I do to thee? But he said, Lord that I may see. And Jesus said to him: Receive Thy sight, thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he saw, and followed Him, glorifying God.*"—(Luc. xviii.)

SECOND PRELUDE.—O my God, cure Thou my blindness, and grant that I may cure that of my brethren.

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons.*—Jesus Christ occupied with the thought of His passion, loved to converse about it. He is about to undergo this passion for the salvation of men. Why are they not better disposed to utilize His sufferings and His death! . . . His heart is continually thinking of bestowing some new favor upon men.—The apostles, who understood nothing of the mystery of the cross which their Master had just now revealed to them, they are planning preferments,

projects of ambition. Nay, a moment after He had informed them of the reproaches He would suffer to atone for human pride. . . . Oh how difficult it is to understand any truth which is contrary to prejudices or passions!—The large crowd which presses around Jesus, eager for new developments, desirous to witness some miracle.—An unfortunate blind man sitting by the wayside, depending upon public charity for existence: "*He sat by the wayside begging.*" How sad his condition! However, he was quite alive to his deplorable situation and was most anxious for a cure. Much more are to be pitied so many sinners plunged in darkness, in which they seem to delight, at the same time begging of creature's gratifications, which degrade them and which nevertheless only increase their sufferings! How much more deplorable is the state of a tepid priest to whom are addressed the words of the Savior: "*Thou sayest I am rich. . . . and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*"—(Ap. iii: 17.)

2d and 3d Points. *Hear the words and consider the actions.* When the blind man hears the multitude passing by, he asks and learns that Jesus is traveling on the road. "*They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.*" With this news a ray of hope enters his soul. He had heard of Jesus, of His power, of His goodness, of His tender compassion for other unfortunate persons. He knew that He had cured other blind men, even one of those who had been born blind. He consequently cries out: "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.*" The passers by bid him to be silent, but he cries out still louder. Here indeed there was an occasion of relief, which was soon to pass away. Would it ever return? When shall I, O my God, cry out to Thee with that ardor which only increases in proportion to the difficulties which it has to overcome? I know full well that Thou lovest importunity in prayer.

Jesus stood. An humble, confident prayer causes the Almighty to stand, to lay down His arms, to open His heart to us. O you blind men of the world, will you not also address your requests to Jesus Christ? Know you not how great is His power and His willingness to do good? Hear you not the sound of that pious multitude which goes to adore Him in His temples? Do at least ask, endeavor to find out what it is. They shall answer you: It is the Savior that is passing by. These are

days of grace, favorable moments which shall soon have passed. . . . It is your God who offers you pardon, peace, eternal felicity.

Jesus commands the blind man to be brought to Him. They say to him: Arise, He calls you. Filled with joy and hope, he goes through the crowd. Behold he is in the presence of the supreme consoler. "*What wilt thou that I do to thee?*" O Son of God, dost Thou permit this poor forsaken blind man to make such use of Thy power as he will choose? Such is My determination. I will grant him everything he desires. What will he ask? What would you have asked in his place? Of what use would be to him all the goods of earth, if he had remained blind? "*O Lord, that I may see.*" Be convinced of this point, O thou my soul, everything is in that prayer. The intelligence of Divine truths prepares the soul for all graces, and can produce all virtues. Let us banish error from the mind, and the heart shall be healed of its passions.—*Receive thy sight*, our Lord replies, *thy faith has made thee whole*, and instantly the blind man saw. Filled with joy, he praises the Lord, and follows the Son of God. I see it, O Jesus! In order to be filled with Thy gifts, it suffices to approach Thee and to pray to Thee with confidence. Shall I languish any longer in my spiritual infirmities, when I am in possession of so easy a means of relief? Refuse not to grant me that faith based on firm confidence and on a holy perseverance in its humility, to which Thou hast attached salvation. Grant that I may see my nothingness, and Thy greatness, O light which art life: "*Give me understanding, and I shall live.*"—(Ps. cxviii: 144.) Ah! there are in our days many blind people to be cured. Thou willest me to have compassion on them, and so be the instrument of Thy mercies. Thou sayest to me: "*Respice.*" Look around you, see many of my disciples who desert my standard to enroll themselves under that of Satan; see hell triumphant, and the angels of peace shedding bitter tears; see! consider those unfortunate men who are your brethren; they rejoice over things conducive to their supreme misfortune. . . . Whither do they go! How bitter the regrets, how dreadful the despair they are preparing for themselves! Will you not enlighten them if you can? For the sake of their souls, be faithful to the inspirations of my grace, and I shall bless your zeal.

Entertain yourself in this wise with our Savior. Take some special resolution; often repeat to-day both for yourself and for other sinners:

"*Jesus, Son of David, and Son of God, have mercy on us!*" or if you prefer it, My Jesus, mercy.

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons concerned.*—Jesus occupied with the thought of His passion, loving to speak of it. . . . He thinks of conferring some new blessing on men.—The apostles who understand nothing about the mysteries of the cross . . . . and occupy their minds with projects of ambition.—The crowd which presses around the Savior eager for something new.—An unfortunate blind man sitting sadly by the wayside. He was sensible of his situation. Much more should we pity so many blind, unfortunate sinners, who live contented in their sad condition.

2d and 3d Points. *Hear the words and consider the actions.* When the blind man hears the crowd advancing along the road, he asks and learns that Jesus is passing by. His heart opens to hope, and he cries out: "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.*" . . . Jesus passing by, is an occasion of salvation which shall soon have disappeared. . . . Consider the marvelous effect of prayer! It causes the Almighty to stand! . . . Jesus commanded the blind man to be brought to Him. . . . The Son of God places at his disposal all His power. "*What wilt thou that I do to thee?*" What will he ask? For a man that is blind, is there anything that can compare with sight? "*O Lord, that I may see!*" His prayer is heard. O Jesus, when shall mine also be granted? "*O God, give me understanding, and I shall live.*"

XXXVI. MEDITATION.

ASH WEDNESDAY—THE LENT OF A GOOD PASTOR.

1st.—HIS PARTICULAR DUTIES DURING THIS TIME.

2d.—MOTIVES WHY HE SHOULD ACCOMPLISH THEM FAITHFULLY.

1st Point. *Particular obligations of a priest, and particularly of a pastor, during Lent.* Some of these relate to his own sanctification; others to the care of his flock.

I. The intention of the Church in the institution of this holy quarantine, has been to make it a time of separation and amendment, consecrated to recollection and prayer, to penance and good works. She has intended in this way to honor the solitude and the long fast of Jesus Christ, and to prepare us for Easter, that is for the passage from death to life, or from an imperfect to a more holy life, as He had prepared Himself by fasting and retirement from the world, to renew the world through the preaching of the Gospel. Now she requires much more from her ministers than from her other children.

A good priest adapts himself to those views of the Church, follows as closely as he can the footsteps of the Savior, and enters with Him into a more retired and silent life. Heavenly inspirations do not come from dissipation and frivolous conversations. He consequently eschews all unnecessary and worldly concerns.

The further his separation from things of earth, the closer his union with God, through frequent and intimate communings. He prays with Jesus Christ, praying for us in the desert, and like his Savior unites fasting to prayer, discarding the counsels of effeminacy regarding the wholesome rigors prescribed for this holy season. He must edify his people, and his success in preaching penance will be in proportion to the mortifications his strength will allow him to practice.

After descending from the mountain where he had spent forty days without eating or drinking, with no other society but that of the beasts of the earth, with no other bed but the rock of the mountains, Jesus will be entitled to begin the course of His instructions by the words: "*Do penance, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.*"—(Mat. iv : 47.) Very great is the authority of good example. Has it not been lacking hitherto in my instructions? The God-man had no need to pray, and the Holy of Holies had no need to do penance. It was for us, said He to His Father, that He sanctified Himself. A pastor should endeavor to grow in holiness, both for himself and for his flock.

II. The season of Lent is, for the priest, the time of unusual work. At this time chiefly he is all activity, and now also he meets with the most consoling results of his labors. During these days of grace, a good pastor is continually engaged, either in praying to God to forgive His people, or in visiting them to bring them back, or to make them advance in virtues.

"*In the time of wrath he was made a reconciliation.*"—(Eccl. xliv : 17.) This duty laid already upon the priests of the old law, is for us of a far stricter obligation. The Church reminds us of it to-day, by directing us to read the words of the prophet Joel. "*Between the porch and the altar, the priests, the Lord's ministers shall weep and shall say : Spare O Lord, spare Thy people, and give not Thy inheritance to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them.*" This obligation was thus understood by the holy men who had charge of souls. Samuel shed so many tears over the sin of Saul, that the Lord had to command him to cease mourning for him. "*How long wilt thou mourn for Saul?*"—(I. Reg. xvi : 1.) We know what were the lamentations of Moses, of Jeremias, of Isaias, over the obstinacy of the Hebrews ; the laments of St. Paul and of Jesus Christ, over the blindness and obduracy of the same people. . . . . Weep you, therefore, O good priests, ministers of reconciliation, after the example of all good pastors, and of the chief of all pastors. Angels of peace, weep bitterly over the loss of souls ; weep over your flocks in the midst of which iniquity abounds, faith is becoming extinct, and scandals are multiplying. But whilst your prayers, your penances, and tears will ascend to God, to appease His anger, do you also speak to your brethren to enlighten, to convert, to save them ?

Speak in the pulpit, in the Catechetical instructions, in administering the sacraments. Speak in public and in private. Lent is pre-eminently the time for announcing the word of God in every salutary manner. It suffices not to explain one dogma, or one point of the moral code ; but give your people a regular course of instructions. Lay down its plan, prepare its matter with the greatest of care, and forget not that you should create love for the word of God ; and as a consequence you must interest your audience, if you seek its improvement. Seriously consider those grave obligations. Examine in what respect you have failed in them. Take the resolution to observe them more faithfully hereafter.

2d Point. *Motives for a pastor to spend the Lent in a holy manner.*

I. He has sins to expiate, he has a soul to save, and this he cannot do unless he will work with earnestness for the salvation of his people ; he is obliged to do penance, and feels a repugnance ; but he feels, as it were, impelled to undertake and to persevere in it constantly, in these days which God has laid apart for this purpose : *Advenerunt nobis dies*

pœnitentiæ. The offices of the Church, the wants of his flock, the penance which he teaches to them fail not to edify him and induce him to do penance.

II. He sees that in this fidelity to the graces of this holy season, he will be enabled to amass a rich treasure of merits. What a rich harvest he will be able to gather through the labors he will undertake, the works of mercy he will continually perform! . . . Will he not remember the admonition contained in the Gospel of this day—"*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven?*"

III. No other season of the year promises him more certain results. The minds of the people are better prepared. The remembrance of the past, the examples they witness . . . touch the hearts of many who had hitherto been under the control of a mortal apathy; and as to God, He is more inclined to clemency. Hear the language full of tenderness which He directs us to apply to sinners: "*Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, because He is bountiful to forgive.*"—(Is. lv: 8.) "*Or will God forget to show mercy, or will He in His anger shut up His mercies?*"—(Ps. lxxvi: 10.) Here is a strange contrast, man cannot restrain his anger, and God cannot shut up His mercies. He allows mercies to overflow from His heart, particularly during this universal fast, when so many pure souls mortify themselves to appease Him. Special graces are annexed to the anniversary days of our redemption. "When we approach the time in which the Church celebrates the memory of the Passion, we must feel assured that heaven pours down copiously the blood of the adorable victim which was slain on Calvary, provided we put no obstacle thereto."—(Nouet.)

In commencing this sacred quarantine, O you pastors, contemplate its end. How would you then like to have kept this holy season? How pleased you will be, if at the end of Lent you may say to yourself, during this Lent, I did give light to many who were blind; I purified lepers, healed some that were sick, raised others that were dead; I brought back stray sheep to the fold. How joyfully will you give the body and blood of Jesus Christ, to those new guests, whom yourself shall have prepared for the sacred banquet. Should God refuse consolations in time to the efforts of your zeal? This privation shall certainly turn to the increase of your everlasting recompense.

1st Point. *The time of Lent imposes special obligations on priests, and particularly on the pastors.* Some of these relate to their own sanctification, others to the sanctification of their flocks. Of her ministers also, the Church requires recollection, penance, and good works as a preparation for Easter. A good priest forbids himself every unnecessary intercourse with the world. He prays with Jesus, and after His example, he joins fasting to prayer. He walks in the footsteps of his Master: *Pro eis sanctifico meipsum.* Lent is the time of great work for a zealous priest. A good pastor, during these days, ceases not to turn to God to appease His anger, and to speak to His people to bring them back to God, and induce them to advance in virtue.

3d Point. *Motives which determine a good pastor to spend Lent in a holy manner.* I. He has a soul to save, and in this work he will not succeed unless he labors fervently to sanctify his people. He must do penance for himself and for the souls confided to his care. II. In his fidelity to the graces of Lent, he sees a powerful means of amassing a rich treasure of merits. "*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.*" No other season of the year promises a spiritual success so certain. The hearts of the faithful are better prepared. Almighty God is more inclined to clemency. Particular graces are annexed to the days on which we commemorate our redemption. He will gather up at Easter what he shall have sowed during Lent.

XXXVII. MEDITATION.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT—JESUS CHRIST TEMPTED IN THE DESERT.

1st.—NO ONE IS SO MUCH EXPOSED TO TEMPTATIONS AS PRIESTS AND PASTORS.

2d.—THEY SHOULD NOT EXPOSE THEMSELVES TO TEMPTATION.

3d.—THEY NEED NOT FEAR TEMPTATIONS IF THEY BE FAITHFUL TO AVOID AND REJECT THEM.

1st Point. *Priests are more exposed than others to temptations.* This results necessarily from their vocation and their duties. It enters into the designs of Providence that all men should be tempted. But if it be said to all: "*Son, when thou comest to the service of God. . . . prepare thy soul for temptation*" (Eccl. ii: 1), how much more should he expect to be tempted who devotes himself not only to serve God, but to procure for Him other servants? As much does the enemy of souls sigh after their eternal loss, so much does he furiously attack him who endeavors to snatch them out of his hands. The army of Jesus Christ is made up of priests who continue for Him the warfare which He Himself inaugurated against the powers of hell, and is it surprising that hell should assault them with greater fury? Satan, besides, knows well the advantage he draws from the fall of a priest for the success of his infernal projects. The whole of the army of Christ is, as it were, wounded in its chief, all the sheep in the person of their pastor: "*Antiquus hostis caput potius quam membra, duces excercitus potius quam militum turmam, et pastores libentius quam ovium greges oppugnare conatur.*"—(St. Laur. Just., de Reg. Præl.)

Our occupations themselves come in as a help to our enemy. Some of these bring us into contact with all the corruption of the world, and all its vices. . . . Great is the facility they afford the spirit of dark-

ness to wake up in us passions which are hardly extinct, or at least to annoy us by troublesome recollections. Others of our duties draw unto us esteem, respect and consideration, and proud Lucifer avails himself of these to solicit us to commit the sin which caused his ruin. If we busy ourselves concerning exterior matters, we are tempted with dissipation of mind, the loss of God's presence, love of the world. . . . Solitude and retirement have also their dangers, whence every priest should say with St. Bernard: *Undique bella mihi video, undique tela volant, undique testamenta, undique pericula; quocumque me vertam, nulla securitas est.* We must, therefore, expect to be tempted, attacks which we foresee are almost without danger: "*Jacula minus feriunt quæ prævidentur.*"—(St. Greg., Hom. 34.)

2d Point. *Priests should not expose themselves to temptations.* The Holy Spirit whom the Savior had received visibly on the banks of the Jordan, soon led Him into the desert to be tempted.—(Mat. iv: 1.) We received the same spirit in our ordination. If it be the Spirit of God and not our own, if it be charity, true zeal, a pure intention which expose us to temptation, God will be with us in the struggle; but if we go imprudently to meet an enemy who has sworn to destroy us, we need not hope to be helped from above, for God will not encourage our rashness nor reward our presumption.

Of this we see a memorable example in the persons of St. Peter and St. Paul. Both go to Jerusalem and expose themselves in like circumstances. There was question for the one and the other to defend the interests of Jesus Christ in presence of His enemies. The one and the other must either deny or confess Him publicly. Both seemed to be in the same dispositions. Peter had declared more than once that he was ready to die. . . . Paul said also as much: "*I am ready, not only to be bound, but to die also in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.*"—(Acts xxi: 13.) Yet St. Peter succumbed and St. Paul triumphed. Whence came the different results? Peter sought the occasion. Why had he entered the hall of Caiphas? Why did he mingle with the wicked world? . . . St. Paul had not acted so; he had, indeed, showed himself in the assembly of the priests in the Prætors palace . . . but the Holy Ghost conducted him thither; he did nothing save by his inspiration: "*Being bound in the spirit I go to Jerusalem.*"—(Ib. xx: 22.) Had St. Peter acted according to the direction of His Master, God's

grace should have prevented his fall, and if Paul had unnecessarily exposed himself to temptation, he would not have overcome.

3d Point. *A priest needs not to fear temptations, if he be faithful to avoid and banish them.*

Let us strive against them promptly, constantly, using the weapons placed at our disposal by our Savior. First of all let us banish immediately any evil suggestions, without deliberating, without temporizing with the enemy: "*Nolo sinas cogitationem crescere . . . dum parvus est hortis interfice.*"—(St. Hier. Ep. 22 ad Eust.) To the stubbornness of attack, let us oppose constancy of resistance, and let us fear the temptations of Satan, even after having overcome them. He has departed only for a time.—(Luc. iv : 13.) Let us mistrust our passions, although they do not actually trouble us. During the time of peace it is that our enemies are plotting. But since each one of our victories has made us stronger, why should we succumb, when the victory has become easier?

Jesus has placed in our hands two invincible weapons, vigilance and prayer; all there is to be done is to wield them properly. Vigilance keeps the eye of the soul ever opened to discover the danger and the tempter, from whatever quarters they may come. The devil is not always the tempter. It is often what we love, what we fear, nay, at times what we respect. Vigilance preserves in us that recollection by which we find our strength in faith: "*Whom resist ye strong in faith.*"—(I. Pet. v : 9.) This was the weapon used by Jesus in banishing the devil. Ah, how great the light which enters the intellect, how powerful the energy imparted to the will by the solemn remembrance: *Scriptum est. It is written.* Vigilance points out the danger, induces resistance; but prayer obtains grace of victory. "*He shall cry to me, and I will hear him, I am with him in tribulation, I will deliver him, and I will glorify him.*' —(Ps. xc : 15.)

Prayer keeps us near the Almighty, and vigilance with ourselves, and so we have no reason for fear; without His consent our enemy works more successfully for our advantage than for our ill; by adding weight to our struggles He multiplies our victories and increases our merits.

For the true servants of God, temptations are a great good. "*My brethren, count it all joy, when you shall fall into divers temptations . . . blessed is the man that endureth temptation.*"—(Jam. i : 2, 12.)

They enlighten us regarding our nothingness, and convey to us the sense of our own weakness. Humiliations tend to sever us from this life, where everything is full of dangers. They offer us the occasion of knowing the Almighty, by having recourse to Him. "*Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*"—(Ps. xlix : 15.) They purify, strengthen and perfect our virtues. "*Power is made perfect in infirmity.*"—(II. Cor. xii : 9.) And far from demonstrating that God spurns us, they are often an earnest of His special love for us. "*Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee.*"—(Tob. xii : 13.)

Go to the altar, nourish yourself with the bread of the strong: "*Mens deficit, quam non recepta Eucharistia erigit et accendit.*"—(St. Cyp., Ep. 54, ad Cor.) The devil trembles when he sees our lips empurpled with the Divine blood: "*Hic Sanguis, cum digne suscipitur, dæmones procul pellit.*"—(St. Chrys.) *Caro Christi nostrarum refrigerat æstum cupiditatum, et libidinis ignem extinguit.*

1st Point. *Priests are exposed to temptation more than others.* In consequence of their vocation and of their occupations. All should fortify themselves against temptations when they desire to serve God; much more so when they intend to lead men to His service. As much does the enemy of souls thirst after our eternal loss, so much does he attack with all his might those who struggle to save them. There are dangers connected with our occupations. The devil uses them to excite our passions, which are hardly extinct. Temptations of pride, when we succeed; temptations of discouragement when we fail. . . . *Undique tela volant, undique tentamenta, undique pericula.*

2d Point. *Priests should not expose themselves to temptation.* If, through real charity and zeal, and by the guidance of the Holy Ghost, I expose myself to temptation, God shall be with me in the struggle. If I expose myself to danger, I must not hope that He will encourage my rashness . . . . of this we have an example in the persons of St. Paul and of St. Peter.

3d Point. *The priest who is careful to avoid and to banish temptation does not need to be alarmed.* However, he should resist them promptly, and use the measures which Jesus Christ has placed at his

disposal. Let us not delay one moment: *Nolo sinas cogitationem crescere. . . . Dum parvus est hostis, interfice.* Watchfulness and prayer. Watchfulness enables us to discover danger, from whatever quarter it may come. Prayer obtains for us power to baffle it. If we know how to take wise precautions, our enemy shall work more successfully for our glory than for our woe.

XXXVIII. MEDITATION.

SAME SUBJECT (CONTINUED)—EVANGELICAL LABORERS ARE PARTICULARLY EXPOSED TO THREE TEMPTATIONS, LIKE UNTO THOSE OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE DESERT.

1st.—EXCESSIVE CARE OF THEIR BODY AND HEALTH.

2d.—INORDINATE DESIRE OF NOTORIETY.

3d.—VIEWS OF SELF-INTEREST AND AMBITION.

1st Point. *Inordinate care of one's body and health.* The devil, seeing the extreme hunger which Jesus Christ suffered after His long fast, advises Him to change stones into loaves of bread. If He be the Son of God, He has the right to perform miracles, and this is for Him a necessity in His present state of exhaustion. The enemy of souls attacks the priests in the same manner. He directs all their thoughts to the care of their health, and in this matter pretexts are not wanting. They imagine themselves to be useful, perhaps necessary, for the glory of God, the service of the Church; they are doing good, and they see before them a vast field opened for their zeal . . . can they be too careful of their health? . . . And on this ground they begin by giving up every practice of mortification. They procure for themselves, as far as they can, all the requisites for an easy and pleasant life, indulge in long sleeps and rich food, and if it happens that they are deprived of any comfort, or have to suffer any inconvenience, they then give way to complaints.

Will an enervating discipline of this kind be able to form an apostle? Was this the example left to us by Jesus Christ? As soon as He had received baptism, and the exterior mission which His Father had given Him by proclaiming Him His Son and the object of His complacency, He withdrew into a desert, being led thither by the spirit of God. How did He spend His time there? He prayed and fasted. He passed forty days without eating or drinking. If He took any rest it was on the bare ground. Was not this telling us, that far from giving up penance when we embrace the life of an apostle, we should particularly, then, consider it as most indispensable?

There are sinners for whom we ought to do penance, if we will convert them, as there are demons who cannot be cast out save by prayer and fasting. Prudence, it is true, should regulate the exercise of mortification, but if we be guided by the example of Jesus Christ, and that of the most holy priest, it seems that one may go far in this way without failing in prudence. Let us, at all events, be cautious, and not rely too much on ourselves ; let us not follow the counsels of the spirit of darkness, who preaches discretion to induce us to lead a sensual life, but let us rather obey the spirit of truth, which guides us through our director. Let us give up this wisdom of the flesh, which is very death because it is an enemy of God, and because by adopting its maxims, it is impossible to please God.—(Rom. viii : 6, 7, 8.) Let us cast all our solicitude on Providence. Will God forget His priests, He who provides for the wants of the birds of the air, and of so many men who make no use of His blessings, except to offend Him? The less will we be solicitous regarding our health, the more will the good Master be its guardian. Let us not forget that great mortification and great confidence in God, are most requisite dispositions to apostolic men.

2d Point. Second temptation. *An inordinate desire of notice.* Against this temptation one should be particularly on his guard when he begins to exercise the holy ministry. A newly ordained priest considers himself fit to discharge any duty. He takes upon him burdens much too weighty for his shoulders. Imagination soars too high ; and it frequently happens that conspicuous reverses are the punishment of this presumption. One may be called to minister to souls, and have neither grace nor calling to perform all the duties of the ministry. If your superiors demand of you no more than to teach catechism, do not

attempt to preach; if they wish you to preach in a country church, think not of addressing large and cultivated audiences in cities. God speaks to you through their mouth. . . . Be not deceived by the false appearances of zeal. There will be no security for you, nor hope of success for your labors except in the place wherein God wishes you to be, and in the exercise of those functions which He has destined for you.

Mistrust that eagerness to make a conspicuous display of talents or zeal, perhaps in the wrong time and place; it is not the Holy Ghost, but rather the tempter who instigates this action. Jesus Christ had been sent to enlighten the world by His preaching; and yet He was led into the desert where no one will come to hear Him. . . . There is a time for everything. He will come out of this solitude. He will begin to preach when the appointed day will have arrived, and neither the glory of God nor the salvation of the world will lose anything by this delay. Behold our model! Let us continue in our obscure occupations; let us be satisfied in the discharge of duties wherein the practice of humility is united to the exercise of charity, viz., hearing the confession of the poor, instructing the children and the ignorant; the best of evangelical laborers began in this way, and preferred this work to all others in the ministry. If, later on, we be called to perform some more conspicuous work, in the estimation of the world, we shall obey with so much the more willingness, that we shall have learned to be diffident of ourselves, and to trust in God alone.

3d Point. *Thoughts of ambition and interest,* are a third temptation. We see both of them used by Satan is his last effort against the Son of God. After taking Him and setting Him upon the pinnacle of the temple, so that He might be seen and admired by the multitude by performing a miracle, he took Him up into a high mountain, and unfolded before His eyes all that is most seductive in the world: "*The kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.*" He shows to Him the grandeur and the glory of earth, not such as they are, but such as they appear to be, and promises to give them all to Him provided He will adore Him. "*All these will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me.*" How many deceitful promises which he makes even now, not to men of the world only, but also to the ministers of God. How many there are who suffer themselves to be dazzled, when he places before

their eyes the glory of those great dignities which the saints feared so much! They imagine that they will obtain great successes, that they will be sought after, applauded, spoken of, promoted to high positions. . . . What may they not hope for from the friendship and favor of men of wealth and influence? And alas, how often do not they silence their conscience to gratify their influential and wealthy friends.

If such thoughts come to our mind, let us humble ourselves, but not, however, give way to despondency, since the father of lies dared to make such suggestions to the Master of truth. Let us answer him with Jesus Christ: "*It is written the Lord Thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.*"—(M. iv.) God alone! Any other obedience would be degradation. Let us seek the goods and honors which shall last for ever, not those which vanish like a dream. Let us preserve the fullness of our liberty, and, if possible, let us owe no man anything save love. Ambition leads to a sad abyss: "*Quam multis honor occasio exitii fuit.*"—(St. Aug.) The first consequence of ambition and cupidity is the debasement of the priestly character. The devil himself, as St. Irenœus remarks, confesses this truth, by using the expression, *Si cadens*, if falling down. . . . This would be indeed descending from the high rank of man of God to be the servant of Satan; it would be to bow down before him whom we should walk on, and how dreadful the consequences to priests: "*Omnium malorum radix cupiditas, ex qua sacrilegia simonia, et omnium fere malorum cohors, prodiit.*"—(Conv. Melod., an. 1879.)

Jesus Christ, triumphing over all the temptations of Satan, is honored and served by angels who are sent by His Father, and bring Him a heavenly nourishment. God is wont to act in like manner toward His faithful ministers. Their disinterestedness and humility win them esteem; they never suffer from want. But let us, then, have no ambition in this world, save that of serving God, and of being poor like Jesus Christ, and to be poor for the sake of Him.

1st Point. *Excessive care of our body and health.* This was the first temptation of our Lord. Pretexts are not wanting. Mortifications might interfere with the ministry. Think of the fast of Jesus Christ.

Penance indispensable to the apostle . . . . confidence also. These are the most necessary dispositions for him.

2d Point. *An inordinate desire of notice.* Let us be on our guard concerning this temptation. Jesus is sent to enlighten the world by His preaching, and yet He is led into the desert by the Spirit. He will begin when the time appointed will have come. Let us be satisfied to fulfill little duties, as it will be pleasing to God.

3d Point. *Thoughts of ambition and cupidity.* Third temptation. These two temptations were used by Satan in his last assault against the Savior. He often now also makes deceitful promises to priests: let us answer him in the words of our Master: *It is written.* Ambition leads to a sad abyss. Disinterestedness and humility are the glory of the priesthood.

XXXIX. MEDITATION.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT—JESUS ON MOUNT THABOR—THE TRANSFIGURATION AND THE PASSION.

1st.—CONNECTION BETWEEN THESE TWO MYSTERIES.

2d.—MANY CHRISTIANS AND PRIESTS TRY TO SEPARATE THEM.

1st Point. *The passion and transfiguration are intimately connected.* It is amid the splendor of His transfiguration that Jesus Christ speaks of His death with two of His ministers of the old covenant, in presence of three ministers of the new. What was there common between Thabor and Calvary? In the first of these mysteries, everything savored of glory and delight for Jesus Christ; in the second, everything spoke of injuries and sufferings. On Mount Thabor He is resplendent as the sun, He is wrapped up in glory as with a bright garment; on Calvary He is naked, disfigured, covered with blood. On Mount Thabor the Father proclaims Him His well-beloved Son: on Calvary He exclaims: "*God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" On this day the apostles do not wish to leave His presence; on the day

of His death they all forsake Him. . . . Yet these two mysteries are intimately connected and explain one another. The one points to the crown prepared for us, the other teaches us what its price must be. Considering the two together, we understand that here alone comfort and trials, glory and ignominy, cannot be separated for a long time. The remembrance of this moderates our joys, comforts us in trials, and animates us with hope. The transfiguration has the particular virtue of kindling in our hearts the sacred fire of Divine love. Were it not for the transfiguration, we should not be so much moved by the thought of the passion. After contemplating the grandeurs of the Son of God, we know how to appreciate the charity which caused Him to humble Himself to the lowest degree of debasement.

If He had not revealed His glories to us, we should not have thought of considering the sacrifice He made of them for us, not for a few hours or a few days only, but during the whole course of His life. A pious sentiment much admitted by mystical writers is, that the state of Jesus Christ on Mount Thabor possessed those qualities of His natural glorious state that could be beheld by human eye; and that His transfiguration was not a miracle, but the momentary interruption of a miracle of love, without which He could neither humble Himself, suffer nor die for us. In the Garden of Olives He suspended the effect of the beatific vision, so that His soul might be oppressed under the weight of immense sadness; during His whole life He suspended the effect of the hypostatic union, so that His holy humanity might be subjected to humiliations, to sufferings and to death.

Why were the apostles alone admitted to witness the transfiguration? The apostles of Jesus Christ are called to have in this world a larger share in His humiliations, and to drink more abundantly from the cup of bitterness. It was, consequently, necessary to teach them, that if they be faithful they are entitled to the highest honors in His kingdom. There are three kinds of saints in heaven who are raised to an especially high rank, and enjoy distinguished honors; they are they who overcome the spirit of untruth by establishing and defending the truth as the doctors, those who triumphed over the world as the martyrs, those who brought the flesh into subjection as the virgins. The first-class was represented on Mount Thabor by St. Peter, who is preeminently the master of faith; the second by St. James, who was the

first amongst all the apostles to sign his faith by his blood ; and th third by St. John : *Cui Christus in cruce matrem virginem virgini commendavit.* Now a good priest acquires claims to this three-fold glory. Of him it may be said as of the disciple whom Jesus loved: *Virgo est electus a Domino.* He is a martyr of charity, continually immolating himself for his flock : "*Martyr semel propter Christum moritur, hic vero multoties propter gregem. Sic Paulus: Quotidie morior propter vestram salutem, fratres.*"—(St. Chrys.) He is doctor ; his mission is to dispel the darkness of ignorance : *Docete ;* and if he fulfill it properly, he may depend upon the Divine promise : "*They that instruct many to justice, shall shine like stars for all eternity.*"—(Dan. xii : 3.) O good priest, remember heaven in the midst of your tribulations. Rejoice at the thought of that incomparable glory which awaits you, and which shall go on increasing with the number of those whom you shall have saved. Be patient, and say with St. Paul : "*That the sufferings of this present time are not worthy of the glory that shall be realized in us.*"—(Rom. viii : 18.) Often unite in your meditations the transfiguration and the passion, Mount Thabor and Calvary.

2d Point. *Many Christians and priests try to separate these two mysteries.* These are they who are led astray by the illusions of a convenient devotion. "*It is good for us to be here.*" They are like St. Peter, willing to be with Jesus Christ, provided it will be amidst honors and delights. But this is quite a false notion. Jesus was but a moment on Mount Thabor, and yet He spoke only of His passion. He dovoted His whole life to the cross : *Tota vita Christi crux fuit et martyrium.* Who does not see that to speak of convenient devotion, is to use a contradiction in the very words? For the word devotion means sacrifice, and a convenient devotion is a formal opposition to piety as taught and practiced by our Savior. The piety which He practiced consisted in a continual immolation ; and He declares it to consist in three points : To deny ourselves, carry our cross, and follow Him. Those three words are the summary of the moral code that He came to teach mankind. To live in piety means to die to my inclinations, to my gratifications, to myself. . . . Now is it possible for me to die to everything and to myself also, without experiencing any trouble and pain?

Is there, however, anything so common in the religious world, nay in the sanctuary itself, as the pretension to unite piety with the

pursuit of pleasure? "Jesus has many lovers of His heavenly kingdom, but few that are willing to bear His cross. He finds many companions of His table, but few of His abstinence. All desire to rejoice with Him, few are willing to suffer with Him; many follow Jesus in the breaking of bread, but few to the drinking the chalice of His passion; many reverence His miracles, but few follow the ignominy of His cross."—(Im. l. ii., ch. xi.) How many priests there are who renew every day at the altar the memory of a God penitent, dying for us on Calvary, and who practice no penance whatever. They preach the Gospel of self-denial, and remain strangers to every practice of mortification. They seek to lead a life of idleness, in the most laborious of all states; they seek for pleasure whilst serving a crucified God. . . . Jesus performed miracles to be able to suffer and be insulted; but they would perform miracles if they could to ward off anything which would incommode their delicacy or wound their pride. How can they, without trembling, read the oracle of St. Paul: "*If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His.*"—(Rom. viii: 9.) Enter, therefore, with determination, and walk with constancy in this royal way of the cross, wherein all apostolic men and all the saints walked before you. "Why, then, are you afraid to take up your cross which leads to a kingdom? In the cross is salvation, in the cross is life. . . . In the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness . . . In the cross is the perfection of sanctity. . . . Take up, therefore, thy cross and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting."—(Im. l. ii., ch. xii.)

1st Point. *Intimate connection between the mystery of the transfiguration and the mystery of the passion.* The first points out to the crown which is destined for us; the second to its price. Joys and sorrows cannot be long separated on earth. If not for the transfiguration we should not be so much moved at the thought of the passion. To appreciate what Jesus has done for us, we should always remember what He is. He chose for the witnesses of His transfiguration those who were to have the larger share in His troubles on earth and in His glory in heaven.

2d Point. *Many Christians and priests seek to separate the two mysteries.* These are the advocates of convenient devotion. They are

willing to be with Jesus Christ, provided it shall be amidst honors and delights. But piety exempt from inconveniences and sacrifices is the very contradiction of that which was taught and practiced by the Savior. His doctrine is summed up in three points: To renounce ourselves, to carry our cross, and to follow Him; as to His examples, they consist in showing us how to suffer. Let us at last enter and walk determinately in this royal way of the cross, wherein apostolic men and all the saints have preceded us.

XL. MEDITATION.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT—"AT THAT TIME JESUS WAS CASTING OUT a DEVIL, AND THE SAME WAS DUMB."—THE MUTE DEVIL.

1st.—THE RAVAGES HE MAKES IN THE FLOCK OF JESUS CHRIST.

2d.—HOW SHOULD PASTORS CONTEND AGAINST HIM.

1st Point. *The mute devil commits great ravages in the flock of Jesus Christ.* "*Death and life, says the Holy Ghost, are in the power of the tongue.*"—(Prov. xviii: 21.) What a source of life there is in the holy use that a priest makes of the gift of speech! But at the same time, what is there more harmful than its bad use? St. James calls it "a world of iniquity." Is not silence alone often a great crime and a cause of many evils, when God commands us to speak? It is the temptation of muteness, which prevents the slaves of human respect from standing up boldly for God, whom they adore in the secret of their hearts, from denouncing fearlessly the scandals which are witnessed. Though they grieve for them in their souls, they throttle truth, and dare not profess their faith at the very time that silence must be interpreted as a sort of apostacy. Thus is virtue abandoned to insults by those who love and cherish its sacredness; impiety and licenticusness are sanctioned and propagated by those who love religion and morality; and as there is nothing so contagious as this weakness, a hundred courageous men will lose heart, because one allowed himself to be overcome by fear.

It is the devil of muteness who induces men otherwise commendable to pass whole years without receiving the sacraments. He changes into mortal poison the most wholesome of remedies, in the case of those unfortunate souls who conceal their sins in confession. They had felt urged on by their conscience to be sincere. The confession was well commenced; if they had said one word more they would have gained heaven, and acquired for this very life a peace which surpasses all understanding. Alas! the devil of muteness closed their lips; they expose themselves to the pains of hell, and are torn by cruel remorse.

But his ravages in the flock of Christ are never so dreadful as when he exerts his tyranny over the pastors themselves, either by paralyzing their tongues, or inducing them to speak in a weak, timid manner, when they ought to proclaim truth with holy energy and even boldness. O priest of God, you allow this devil to triumph thus sadly over you, when, having charge of souls, you neglect to instruct your people. Ignorance of religion draws all other evils in its train. When you do not correct scandalous sinners, who pervert your people, the licentious, blasphemers, the profaners of the Lord's day; when you do not stand up as a wall of brass against sinful practices; when by lack of instruction concerning the sacraments, you allow them to be received without fruit and without respect; when in the tribunal of penance, you do not instruct the guilty concerning obligations, which you alone can make known to them—do you not act under the control of this devil of muteness? What means, St. Cyprian asks, this cruel mercy, which heals not the wounded man, but merely covers up the sore and closes death within? *Nihil in sacerdote, says St. Ambrose, tam periculosum est apud Deum, tam turpe apud homines, quam quod sentiat, non libere denuntiare.* Examine yourself seriously regarding those points. Have you that zeal which "*reproves, entreats, rebukes in all patience?*"—(II. Tim. iv: 2.) Let us hear St. Jerome: *Si sacerdos est et non corripit delinquentes, sacerdotis officium præterit.* Spare yourself the grief of exclaiming too late: "*Woe is me, because I have held my peace.*"—(Is. vi: 5.)

2d Point. *How we should contend against this mute devil.* If there be question of human respect, we should turn its weapons against that defect. It uses shame and fear to attack man. Let us cause its poor unfortunate victims to blush and to tremble. What is the victim

of human respect ashamed of? Of virtues, of religion, of God, of Jesus Christ, that is of all that is glorious to man. What is he afraid of? A word, a smile, the opinion of men of prejudiced mind and corrupt heart, whom he despises in his heart. He pretends to be independent, and yet he submits to the most abject servitude, panders to the errors, caprices, and passions of those who attack him, allowing them to domineer over his very conscience. Is there any slave as low as he is? If he has not lost his faith, let him consider the oracle of Jesus Christ: "*He that shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when He shall come in His majesty.*"—(Luke ix: 26.)

In these days of preparation for Easter communion, let us give special attention to these poor souls which the devil tempts so terribly, by urging them to conceal their sins at the very time when a full avowal would reconcile them to their God. How can pride be ashamed of a humiliation which is so glorious? Let us anticipate the temptation by encouraging words. It is in this case especially that the confessor ought to show the consideration and tender compassion of a father.

Finally, to guard ourselves against the perfidious suggestions of the devil of muteness, let us often think on the terrible account we will have to render, of the talents and sacred duties intrusted to us. The pastor of souls should be wise and cautious, but he should also be firm and unyielding. "*God hath scattered the bones of those who please men; they have been confounded, because God hath despised them.*"—(Ps. lii: 6.) God will punish a most despicable timidity equally with the most conspicuous crimes. "*But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable and the murderers . . . they shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone.*"—(Ap. xxi: 8.) Let us heed the warning of St. Ambrose: "*Canes muti reprobantur in scripturis unde et tu disce vocem tuam exercere pro Christo. . , ne quasi mutus canis commissam tibi Ecclesiæ custodiam quodam prævaricationis silentio deseruisse videaris.*"—(In Ps. cxviii.) Let us adopt the beautiful maxim of St. Gregory Nazianze: One thing only should the servant of God be afraid of, which is, of fearing something else more than God. *Nec quidquam metuendum est, quam ne quid magis quam Deum metuamus.*

You will at the altar receive Him whose power the people admired, exclaiming: "*He made the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.*" Ask

of Him as a special favor, that in giving you His sacred body, He may please to untie your tongue, that you may speak fearlessly, whenever the interests of His glory and of the salvation of souls will be concerned.

1st Point. *The devil of muteness commits great ravages in the flock of Christ.* "*Death and life are in the power of tongue.*" Silence is sometimes a crime and the cause of serious evils. It is the silent devil who prevents the slave of human respect from speaking ; keeps them away from the sacraments, and especially from confession, or urges them to commit a sacrilege. But his ravages are never so deplorable as when he silences the tongue of the priest. Hence, it happens that instruction is neglected, correction is omitted, or feebly made. Let us spare ourselves the grief of saying, but alas, too late : "*Woe is me ; I have held my peace.*"

2d Point. *How we should contend against the devil of muteness.* When it is a case of human respect, let us urge its poor unfortunate victim to blush and to tremble, by placing before him the object of his fear. He is ashamed of all that is most noble, virtue, religion, God Himself. He fears that which is least of all to be feared, the judgment of men of warped mind whom he despises. Let us show him another object of confusion and terror. "*He that shalt be ashamed of me,*" etc. Let us take particular care of those souls which the devil tempts to conceal mortal sins in confession. Let us induce them to understand the glory and happiness resulting from a sincere and full confession. Finally, to guard ourselves against this despicable weakness, let us reflect on the account we will have to render of the gifts and duties intrusted to us. "*God has scattered the bones of those who please men ; they have been confounded, because God has despised them.*"

XLI. MEDITATION.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT—MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES—CONTEMPLATION.

1st.—CONTEMPLATE THE PEOPLE CONCERNED IN THE MIRACLE.

2d.—LISTEN TO THE WORDS OF THE EVANGELIST.

3d.—CONSIDER THE FACTS.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Jesus Christ finding Him in a desert place surrounded with a great multitude, instead of sending them away fasting, as the apostles desired, orders the latter to distribute among them five loaves and two fishes which are miraculously multiplied so as to satisfy the hunger of five thousand men, not counting the women or children. Excited by this miracle, the people wish to proclaim Him king.—(John vi.)

SECOND PRELUDE.—Represent to yourself a vast plain, in which Jesus is surrounded by His disciples and a crowd of people. He is continually engaged in preaching, or in healing the sick.

THIRD PRELUDE.—Let us beseech the Savior to unfold to our minds the meaning of the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, to infuse into our hearts the sentiments which it calls forth; but especially to give us grace to know and to love the Eucharistic banquet prefigured by this miracle.

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons.* First, Jesus Christ. Consider His indefatigable zeal. After spending the whole day in instructing the people and healing the sick, He had retired with His apostles to a neighboring mountain to seek repose. However, He soon returned. He was expected on the plain by a numerous multitude of men. They had already listened to His preaching, and desired to hear Him again. The fact that they had not eaten anything for a long time, did not seem to annoy them. Imagine for a moment that you notice on His countenance a marked expression of tender compassion, caused by the sight of so many persons who are in need of food, resembling sheep without a shepherd, and who had no hope of assistance except from Him.

"*When Jesus, therefore, had lifted up His eyes and seen that a very great multitude cometh to Him,*" etc.

"Blessed is the soul, O Lord, on which Thou lookest in Thy mercy!" It will surely be comforted, however great its affliction may be. Blessed is he who seeks Thee, whom Thou seest coming to Thee.

Consider the apostles. Here they are presented to us with their virtues and their foibles. Notice how earnestly they request Jesus Christ at first to dismiss the multitude, very little concerned about its future welfare; and in the second place, how kindly they wait on the crowd, when Jesus gave His command. Consider how annoyed they are when Christ commanded them to distribute food to the crowds, and yet with what readiness they obey His order. "*He commanded them that they should all sit down, and they sat down.*"—(Mat. vi: 24, 40.)

Now bestow your attention on the people. Its knowledge of Jesus Christ was certainly very imperfect; and the motive which led them to follow Him, was far from being supernatural. Yet, how sincere the attachment they manifest for Jesus Christ Himself! How strong their constancy in following Him and remaining in His company! They hunger after the Divine teaching; and this very famine of their souls makes them heedless of their bodily wants. Remark how implicitly they rely on the power and goodness of Jesus. As long as they have the happiness to see and to hear Him they fear no untoward emergency. Why is not my confidence equal to theirs?

2d and 3d Points. *Hear the words, consider the facts.* "*And when the day was now far spent, the disciples came to Him, saying: This is a desert place and the hour is now past. Send them away, that going into the next villages and towns, they may buy themselves meat to eat.*"—(Mark. vi: 35, 36.)

Such is the conduct of men. When there is question of assisting others, they are always ready to adopt the measures which will give them the least trouble. They like to place their burden on the shoulders of others. How many of these people, exhausted by long abstinence, would have fainted on the way, if Christ had dismissed the crowd to comply with the request of the apostles! O my God, send me not to human agencies to procure spiritual comfort. Their ability and willingness to afford assistance are very uncertain. Grant this comfort yourself, O Lord. I need only one thing—Thy love.

The proposal of the apostles, humanly speaking, was quite reasonable; and the Savior's answer must have amazed them: "*They have no need to go; give you them to eat.*"—(Mat. xiv: 16.) "But they replied: *Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them that every one may take a little.*" This statement was equivalent to saying that it was utterly impossible for them to feed so many persons; and this was precisely the avowal He desired from them. The more limited human power is, the more conspicuous is the action of God. He asks them how many loaves they have, and they answer, "*only five loaves and two fishes,*" and they hasten to add: "*But what are these among so many?*" Then Jesus said to them: "*Bring them hither to Me, and He commanded them that they should all sit down by companies.*" "They sat in ranks by hundreds and by fifties!" Then He raises His eyes to heaven, thanking His Father for the power He has given Him; He blesses the loaves and the fishes, divides them and gives them to His apostles that they may distribute them to the people. In His sacred hands the bread is multiplied. All eat, all were filled, and with the leavings that were gathered up they filled up twelve baskets. What was passing in the minds of the apostles while through their ministry a miracle so touching was being accomplished? What was passing in the minds of those who ate the miraculous bread? How pure, how modest the joy of all the people! In this manner did the Son of God strengthen the faith of His disciples, give them an idea of His power, prepare the way for the institution of the Eucharistical banquet, "*for, says the Evangelist, the Pasch was near at hand.*" It was well to place before their eyes a figure of that Christian Pasch, in which the Lamb of God, mystically immolated, was to be eaten under the figure of bread.

For the Church was soon to spread all over the word. It was to be divided into many congregations, each under its particular pastor, from whom it was to receive the heavenly bread; and this living and life-giving food was never to be exhausted.

"*They all eat and were filled;*" because they were hungry and relished the excellent food presented to them. Oh how much more proper it is that we should desire to partake of the Holy Eucharist! Are we exempt from infirmities and want in the desert of this life? Can the heavenly bread given to us be compared with the bread bestowed

upon the people? We admire in the Eucharist the reunion of many miracles, the abridgment of many mysteries. "*All were filled and strengthened.*" Such is the effect of the Holy Eucharist when it is well received. It appeases spiritual hunger entirely. We seek no longer the pleasures of earth when we have once tasted those of heaven. The Holy Eucharist imparts strength, and it is appropriately called "the bread of the strong." In its admiration of the power and the goodness of the Savior, the multitude wishes to proclaim Him king. Jesus, always humble, however, refused this honor, "*and He fled again into the mountain Himself alone.*"—(John vi: 15.) His kingdom was not of this world. Ah! let us who know Him better than did the Jews, call Him to reign in our hearts. This is a royalty which He desires to enjoy; and how much we ought to desire it ourselves!

Communion well received brings under His subjection all the faculties of our souls, places us entirely under His blessed dependence. Let us on this day unite with the Church and petition to participate worthily in this holy mystery: "*Da nobis, quæsumus, misericors Deus, ut sancta tua quibus incessanter explemur, sinceris tractemus obsequiis, et fideli semper mente sumamus.*"—(Pots. Rom.)

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons concerned.* Consider Jesus Christ and His indefatigable zeal. After caring for their souls, He does not forget the corporal needs of men. How compassionately He looks upon the famished multitude which, for the sake of hearing Him, had forgotten to take food with them. Consider the apostles with their imperfections and their good qualities. They first urge our Savior to dismiss all the people. However, as soon as He has given the order, they are willing and even anxious to minister to the wants of the people. Notice also the number of the multitude. How fully they rely on the goodness and the power of the Savior. As long as they can see and hear Him they are afraid of nothing.

2d and 3d Points. *Hear the words and consider the actions.* What do the apostles say to Jesus Christ? "This is a desert place, the hour is late, dismiss the people." Men are always anxious to place their burdens on the shoulders of others. O my God, tell me not to seek mere human resources. In Thee alone do I confide. What does the Savior

answer? He desires the apostles themselves to feed the multitude, so as to induce them to acknowledge their inability, and to return to Him the glory of the miracle He is about to perform. Gifts multiply in the hands of Jesus. They all eat. They are all filled, and with the leavings they fill up twelve baskets. Think of the reflection of those who eat this miraculous bread. This holy repast is the figure of the Eucharistic banquet. It contains a nourishment far superior to that given to this people. Think of how many graces flow so abundantly from the Eucharist; how deliciously it satiates the hunger of those who receive it worthily. Let us manifest our gratitude as those people did of yore. Jesus refuses the kingdom offered Him; however, He will accept the dominion over our hearts. This is a kingdom He desires to obtain.

XLII. MEDITATION.

PASSION SUNDAY—"WHICH OF YOU WILL CONVINCE ME OF SIN?"—(John viii: 46)—THE APOSTOLIC MAN AND HIS PERSECUTORS.

1st. — IF THE APOSTOLIC MAN IS TRUE TO HIS DUTY HE WILL ALWAYS MEET WITH PERSECUTION.

2d.—HIS CONDUCT IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES.

1st Point. *The apostolic man will always meet with opposition.*

In other words, there will always be those who dislike and oppose him. There certainly never was a man who so well deserved the admiration and love of all as our Lord Jesus Christ. His kindness, His condescension, the multitude of His miracles, which evidenced His goodness even more than His power, should have won all hearts to Him. And yet no man ever received such contumely and even inhuman treatment.

Our Lord, knowing that the Pharisees were continually laying plots to kill Him, endeavors to open their eyes to the enormity of such a crime. He as much as says: Make your accusations publicly. Bring

forward one impeachable act and then prove its illegality or its sinfulness. "*Which of you can convince me of sin?*" Alas, truth and virtue are powerless with those who will hear nothing but the voice of passion. By their inability to bring any good accusations against Christ, the Pharisees confessed that He was above reproach. The proper inference to be drawn was: He is a just man, a prophet and perhaps the Messiah; but, gangrened by jealousy they answered: "*Do we not say well, that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil.*" Is it possible that to be without sin, is a proof of friendship with the devil? Baffled hatred leads to rage. It begets insult and blasphemy.

If the ministers of Jesus Christ are faithful to their duty, they will always meet with the same treatment as their Master. "*If they have persecuted Me they will also persecute you. If they have kept my word, they will also keep yours.*"—(John xv: 20.) Everything was predicted. They are "the light of the world and the salt of the earth." Light is annoying to defective eyes; virtue banishes vice. "*If I tell you the truth, why do you not believe me?*"—(John viii: 41.) Ah, this is precisely the reason why they will not believe Thee. Lord, if we flatter the proud by teaching them only easy doctrines, they will readily believe us; but if we teach them truths distasteful to their ideas, they quickly resort to abuse. "*They, therefore, took up stones and cast at Him.*" Contradiction will come at times from those whom we considered as our friends. Of this St. Paul complained in an affecting manner: "*You received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Such was your affection toward me that if it could have been done, you would have plucked out your own eyes, and would have given them to me. Am I then become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?*"—(Gal. iv: 16.) There is no middle course; either I must betray my sacred trust and sacrifice my conscience, or I must make up my mind to be thwarted in my designs, to be opposed and ill-treated. If I please the world, I must yield to fallacies and even passions. Save me, O Lord, from a conduct so vacillating and even sinful.

2d Point. *What should be the conduct of an apostolic man toward his persecutors?* Our Savior teaches us. To call a Jew a Samaritan was considered a very gross insult, and to call any man a demoniac was considered an outrage. To the first accusation our Lord answered nothing, because it was a personal insult. The latter, however, He re-

futes by simply exposing the truth, because such an accusation might lower Him in the eyes of the people; and, moreover, it could not be reconciled with His zeal for the glory of His Father. "*I have not a devil, but I honor My Father and you dishonor Me.*" How admirable His self-control, how heavenly His calmness! When He rebuked vices, says St. Jerome, His words were full of energy. "*Asper erat.*" But when obliged to deny calumny, His answers were marked by evenness of temper: "*Multa mansuetudine utebatur.*" He denied He was a demoniac. He asserted that He honored His Father. This was His whole justification.

Behold our model. Let us repudiate with energy all insults against our Lord. Let us ignore those which are of a personal nature: "*Quæ ad Deum pertinent vindicare, quæ vero ad nos despicere.*"—(St. Jerome, Hom. liv, in Joan.) Let our conduct be such as to enable us to say in all sincerity with our Lord: "*I seek not my own glory. There is one that seeketh and judgeth.*" Yes; there is one who will maintain our dignity. God, who sees and governs and who judges all things, will one day make known all things to the world. "*He that judgeth me is the Lord who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart.*"—(I. Cor. iv: 4, 5.) Let us, in imitation of our Savior, leave our injured feelings in the hands of our Father: "*Illatas contumelias Patris judicio reservat.*"—(St. Bon. Ex. 1 a, 4 l.) Let us give our reputation into His keeping. Our cause is His. He will give us victory, if not in this life, certainly at the day of judgment. Abused by men, we will be blessed by God, who will proportion the joys of His servant to the trials endured for His sake. "*They will curse and Thou wilt bless; let them that rise up against me be confounded; but Thy servant shall rejoice.*"—(Ps. cviii: 28.)

The goodness of Jesus acts merely as an incentive to renewed persecution on the part of His enemies. They take up stones, and would fain make Him suffer, without a trial, the punishment decreed against blasphemers. But through love for us He made choice of another punishment more cruel and more ignominious still. By a miracle He glides unseen among them. His unexpected disappearance is their only punishment. Had He not the power and the right to punish them? Certainly so. But He wished to teach us that patience should some-

times stay the hand of power, and right yield to charity ; that there is more real greatness in suffering than in taking revenge; and finally, that the possession of power should be always governed by generosity and mercy.

Let us not forget that we have been sent like lambs among wolves. But let us always possess our souls in patience so that the most offensive treatment may never extort from us an injurious word. Let us render good for evil, love for hatred, meekness for wrath. "*Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good.*"—(Rom. xii : 21.) The Lamb of God, which will soon be the nourishment of our souls, will instill into us those holy dispositions if we utter fervent prayers for this object.

1st Point. *An apostolic man will always meet with opposition.* He will always find some that will oppose and dislike him. The Savior was persecuted. "*Which of you shall convince me of sin?*" In not advancing anything after this challenge, the enemies of Christ avowed that His conduct was irreproachable. They, however, continue their attacks, and call Him a Samaritan, a demoniac. Such also is the lot of a good priest. He is the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Light, however, is always offensive to weak eyes. Virtue is displeasing to vice. Contradiction often comes from those whom we considered our friends. Either I must be lax in my ministry, or be ready to meet opposition and annoyance.

2d Point. *What should be the conduct of a good priest toward his enemies?* Jesus Christ teaches us : "*I have not a devil but I honor My Father.*" How adorable His calmness and self-possession. Let us repudiate with energy insults offered to God ; let us ignore those directed against ourselves. Let us give up to the Lord the care of our justification. Our cause is His. Let us never forget that we have been sent like lambs among wolves, and that our duty is to render good for evil.

XLIII. MEDITATION.

FRIDAY OF PASSION WEEK—MARY AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS.

1st.—HER LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST GIVES US AN IDEA OF HER SUFFERINGS.

2d.—HER SUFFERINGS HELP US TO UNDERSTAND THE LOVE SHE BEARS US.

1st Point. *The love of Mary for Jesus is a proof and measure of her sufferings at the foot of the cross.* The greater her love for the adorable victim which suffers under her eyes, the more important is the part she takes in his sufferings, for this is a martyrdom of love of which the heart is the victim. What is the nature of the love of Mary for Jesus? It is the true love of the most tender mother for her son, of the holiest of creatures for her God.

I. Love of a mother. Nature knows not any other love equal to a mother's love. The mother lives, suffers, rejoices in her child. Hear the cry of the woman of Canaan: "*Have mercy on me, my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil!*"—(Mat. xv.) It is to the mother herself that the Lord shows pity in relieving the distress of her daughter. God in creating Mary had destined her to be the mother of His Son incarnate, and in consequence formed in her the most maternal of all hearts. The heart of Mary, moreover, was never stained or divided by any of those imperfect affections common to the hearts of other mothers. It must also be borne in mind that no son ever offered so many lovable qualities to the heart of a mother. This love may be considered as produced by the charming individuality of Jesus, or by the priceless favors which he bestowed on His mother. Every single privilege which Mary possesses owes its principle and development to the fact of her divine maternity. She loved Jesus with a mother's love, and this affection was intensified by the knowledge that He was more estimable than all the sons of men.

II. She loved Jesus as her God. To the fervor of her maternal love, there was added in her heart the fire of Divine charity. According to the opinion of the ablest doctors of the Church, the love of Mary toward God surpassed that of seraphs, from the very moment of her most pure conception. Now this love for God continued to increase in intensity through her intimate relations with Jesus ; not only during the nine months she bore him in her womb, but also during the thirty-three years of His mortal life, Mary never failed to avail herself of the graces she every moment received ; and this fidelity was ever rewarded by a continual development of charity. Such was the love of Mary's heart for her Son and her God. From this level let us fathom the depth of her affliction when she heard of the beginning of the passion of her Son, when she followed its progress, more especially, however, when she beheld its awful termination on Mount Calvary. How bitterly she regretted not to have been near her Son in the garden of Gethsemane, and in the house of Caiphas. She might have wiped the bloody sweat from His face, shared in the ministrations of the comforting angel. She might have offset so many insults by adoration, and mitigated so much inhumanity by her tenderness.

She hastens to seek her Son. Alas, where and in what state will she find Him? He is about to be scourged, and she sees the crowd rushing toward the pretorium. She hears the sound of the lashes ; later on she will hear that of the hammers driving nails into His hands and feet. The sight of Christ crucified should draw our attention to the foot of the cross. There we can behold the queen of martyrs. All her sorrows have reached their extreme. The present situation is immeasurably different from that of the circumcision. There Jesus lost but a few drops of blood, which could be easily stanched. Now, however, from His body, torn and mangled by deep and numerous wounds, the blood flows in streams. Her presence brings Jesus no comfort, but rather an increase of sufferings: "*Quis est homo qui non fleret, matrem Christi si videret in tanto supplicio?*" What a current of bitter sorrows must have flowed between those hearts which knew each other so intimately. Their mutual love produces still another wound. This mutual love can be compared to two fires which give aid and development to their mingled flames. We can picture Mary compassionating with Jesus dying, and resigning herself with Him. "O God, O my God,

why hast Thou forsaken me? Yet, O my God, I submit to Thy will. I commend my soul into Thy hands by giving to Thee the life of my Son, which is a hundred times dearer to me than my own." Thus all is consummated. A mutual immolation is made by mother and Son. "It is consummated." Let us mingle our tears with those of the disconsolate mother. Let us grieve for having been the cause of her deep affliction; but let us also seek therein the motives of the most solid consolation.

2d Point. *The sufferings of Mary on Calvary a proof and measure of her love for us.* That the mother of God exerts upon her Son by her prayers a real omnipotence, is a matter which admits of no doubt. Numberless facts and the precise teaching of the doctors of the Church, leave no room for dispute. St. Anselm sums up as follows, the tradition of the Church on this point: "*Ut impossibile est quod illi, a quibus virgo Maria oculos suæ misericordiæ avertit, salventur: ita necessarium est quod hi ad quos convertit oculos suos, pro eis advocans, justificentur et glorificentur.*"—(St. Ans. in parte 4, 4, t. 15, c. 14.) What more, then, remains for us to desire, since Mary's love for us is equal to her power? Who will, however, instill into our minds a conviction so sweet? Mary at the foot of the cross. Let us endeavor to understand what she does for love of us, and also what Jesus dying on the cross does to increase this love.

I. St. Thomas thinks that God desired the consent of Mary before taking her Son from her, just as He had required it before giving Him to the world. She was requested to sanction this sanguinary immolation, as she had consented to His incarnation in her womb. But was there an interest of so great magnitude as to compensate the affection of such a mother for the loss of such a Son? Yes; there was such an interest at stake, the welfare of our salvation. Whereupon, St. Bonaventure says: "*Sic Maria dilexit mundum, ut filium suum unigenitum daret.*" Her love of Jesus was her torture; her love of us was her support.

From the moment that the angel had announced to her that she would be the mother of the Redeemer, she had partly forseen the full responsibility of this dignity. She understands it now, in a manner truly appalling. She is strengthened, however, in this supreme trial, by the same devotion to our interests, which had enabled her before to accept so many other sorrows. To-day, in her agony, she repeats to

God what she had said in accepting the Divine maternity: "*Be it done unto me according to Thy word.*" Or she says with her Son, and with the same sentiments: "*Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me.*" O my Father, if this chalice can pass away from me, and I may not drink it to the bitter dregs. Contemplate the face of Christ Thy Son, and mine also. . . . . Has He not suffered enough? Ah, couldst Thou preserve for His afflicted mother the breath of life which is still left Him! . . . If, however, O Lord, the redemption of men cannot be abundant, unless I see Him dying under my eyes, let Thy will be done. "*Not my will but Thine be done.*" God expected this moment in which, through love of men, she made this most heroic of sacrifices, to invest her with the right and quality of our mother. "*Behold Thy son . . . behold Thy mother.*" But do we understand the impression she experienced with this last act of the will of Jesus Christ toward us?

If, up to this moment, she had felt nothing but indifference toward us, surely words like these and in such circumstances, should have inspired her with the most ardent maternal love. Her dying Son is He who speaks to her: "*Mulier, woman!*" In not giving thee a sweeter name, I spare thy sacred heart. Thou seest what I have done for men, and how much I desire their happiness; into thy hands I commend their fate. Be their mother, love them as you have loved Me. Behold standing here John, My disciple; in him consider all My disciples; love Me in them, by loving them for Me. "*Behold thy Son.*" Ah, to what extent did not the love of Mary for us increase, at hearing this last recommendation of her dying Son. Ah, if another mother were able to forget her children. Mary can no more forget us than she can forget the scene on Calvary. Let us comfort her in her sorrow. Let us endeavor, if it were possible, to fill the place of the adorable Son whom she sacrificed for us. And let us, above all, fear to afflict her again, by not confiding in her love. To her love we have a particular claim, as priests and co-operators with Jesus Christ in the redemption of men. John as disciple, represented all the Christians; and as apostle, he represented all the evangelical laborers, who, to the end of time, would apply to souls the merits of the Redeeming blood: *Eia mater, fons amoris, me sentire vim doloris, fac ut tecum lugeam. . . . Fac ut ardeat cor meum in amando Christum Deum, ut sibi complaceam.*

1st Point. *The love of Mary for Jesus, measure of her sufferings at the foot of the cross.* She loved Him as her Son. The heart of a mother is the symbol of tenderness. A mother lives in her child as much and more than in herself. Never did another son before present so many charms to the love of a mother. For all the privileges she enjoyed she was indebted to Jesus Christ. She loved Him as her God. If her charity at the very moment of her immaculate conception surpassed already that of the seraphs, what must it have been after thirty-three years, for each moment brought to her an increase of this virtue? Let us start from these two principles in order to sound the depth of her affliction, when informed of the first circumstances of the passion, when she followed its progress, when, with her own eyes, she witnessed its appalling consummation on Calvary.

2d Point. *Sufferings of Mary at the foot of the cross, measure of her love for us.* St. Thomas thinks that she was desired to give her formal consent to the bloody immolation of her Son as she had given it to His incarnation. The love of Mary for Jesus caused her torment, and her love for us was her support. How wonderful the power of a love which enabled her to suffer such a sacrifice. This love, however, must have received a prodigious increase, when her Divine Son, expiring on the cross, recommended to her as His last will to adopt us for her children. Priests have particular claims to the love of Mary, being co-operators with Jesus Christ in the redemption of men.

XLIV. MEDITATION.

PALM SUNDAY—TRIUMPHANT ENTRANCE OF JESUS INTO JERUSALEM—CONTEMPLATION.

1st.—CONTEMPLATE THE PERSONS CONCERNED.

2d.—HEAR THEIR WORDS.

3d.—CONSIDER THEIR ACTIONS.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Jesus drawing near to Jerusalem, called two of His disciples and said: "Go ye into the village that is over against you, and immediately you shall find an ass tied and a colt with her, loose them and bring them to me . . . . and the disciples going did as Jesus commanded them, and they brought the ass and the colt and laid their garments upon them, and made Him sit thereon. . . . and a great multitude spread their garments on the way, and others cut boughs from the trees and strewed them in the way; and the multitude that went before and that followed cried saying: Hosanna to the Son of David."—(Mat. xxi: 1 et. seq.) And some of the Pharisees from amongst the multitude said to Him, "Master, rebuke Thy disciples."—(Luc. xix.)

SECOND PRELUDE.—Represent to yourself the road from Bethphage to Jerusalem, covered with garments, strewed with leaves and boughs of trees, and the great multitude escorting the Savior.

THIRD PRELUDE.—Ask of our Lord grace to comprehend the vanity of all human glory. Ask Him to make a triumphant entry into your soul, and to always reign there.

1st Point. *Consider the persons concerned.* Jesus, the adorable hero. He leaves Bethany and the household of Lazarus, which, a few days before, He had found in tears, and which is now in joy. See how He now condescends to participate in the joy of a people who acknowledge Him to be the Messiah, or at least a great prophet. In the mission of the two disciples to Bethphage, admire the knowledge He had of the future as of the present, of events depending on the free will of men, as well as those which result from a necessary cause. Notice His

calm, sweet majesty in the midst of this spontaneous ovation, in which everything breathes simplicity. His calmness is the same in the midst of honors as it will be amidst reproaches. Whilst appreciating the marks of affection which He receives, He reflects on the inconstancy of the human heart. Consider the apostles who surround their Master and take part in His triumph. Is there for the ministers of the Lord a satisfaction more deeply felt than that of seeing Him known, adored and loved? The good unite with Him in His different situations; they are grieved when He is offended, they are happy when He is glorified. Consider the people which organizes this triumph. They were the inhabitants of Jerusalem and strangers who had come hither for the Easter celebration. Some of them were already His disciples; the others were inclined to adhere to Him, because of the miracles which they had seen Him performing, or of which they had been told. They were all favorably impressed through the recent resurrection of Lazarus. . . . See joy depicted on all countenances, and do yourself rejoice, seeing that at last your Divine King is justly treated. . . . But where is Mary? Why did she not come and enjoy the triumph of her Son? She was near Him in the stable. She will accompany Him to Calvary, but on the day of His glory she hides herself. She wishes to teach me that obscurity and a desire to remain unknown to creatures, are the safest way to remain united to God, and to advance in His love. She must, by her example, encourage me to seek during this life, not that which flatters, but rather that which mortifies nature.

2d Point. *Listen to the words.* Amongst this people, which is now free to speak out their sentiments, the disciples of Jesus Christ form themselves into groups, proclaim His praise, relate His miracles and His good deeds. They communicate their feelings to the multitude, and we soon hear the throngs which precede and those which follow celebrating aloud the glory of God, and blessing the Son of David who comes in the name of the Lord: "*The multitude that went before and that followed, cried saying: Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.*"—(Mat. xxi: 9.)

But the praises offered to God are a torment to the wicked. The Pharisees are enraged by what they witness. They wish that the Master should command His disciples to be silent: "*Master, rebuke Thy*

disciples." He answers: "*I say to you, that if these hold their peace, the stones will cry out.*"—(Luc. xix: 40.) Those stones did speak, they raised their voice, they cried out at the death of their Creator, when His disciples held their peace. Their voice was heard, it touched the most hardened hearts, and forced them to acknowledge that the crucified was really the Son of God.—(Mat. xxvii: 54.)

O Jesus, will the tongue of Thy ministers cease to praise Thee, and to convert souls to Thee, when that of the wicked is so prolific in words of scandal and blasphemy? Grant that we may speak out with courage, when there is question of the interests of Thy glory; grant especially that the holiness of our life may speak so loudly as to confound Thy enemies, and to edify Thy servants, and that everything within us may bless Thee, and render Thee homage as to our heavenly King.

3d Point. *Consider the actions.* After leaving Bethany, Jesus sends two of His disciples to the next village, directing them to bring to Him an humble animal. To them the order must have appeared strange, imprudent, apt to excite murmur, nay perhaps unjust; yet they pass no remarks about it, and obey with simplicity. The esteem they had of Him who gave the order, did not permit them to entertain such thoughts as those. They start immediately, and their act is a prelude to that obedience which Jesus will require of them when He will command them to go and teach all nations, to break their chains asunder, and to bring them to Him, that they may increase the glory of His triumph.

At Jerusalem, as soon as the people is informed of His coming, they go out in crowds to meet Him. A sentiment of respect seizes them as soon as they perceive Him, and, in a transport of joy, they cut off branches of palm and olive trees, hold them in their hands and wave them in sign of gladness. Each one does what he can to welcome the King of Israel, the Messenger of God. These spread out their garments on the road, other strew leaves of trees over it. Jesus advances, enters Jerusalem, and goes up to the temple amid the acclamations of an ever growing multitude, which ceases not to bless Him. We have seen the accomplishment of the prophecy: "Say to the daughter of Zion, behold thy King comes to thee meek."

This triumph, however, is the image of another triumph, in which

the prophecy finds a more perfect accomplishment. We refer to the triumph of Jesus Christ, who, after banishing sin from a soul, re-enters it through a worthy communion. The palms are an emblem of the victories gained by that soul over her enemies, and the garments spread along the way figure the vices which she drove away, in order to be less undeserving to approach the holy table. O priest, you procure for Jesus Christ this triumph, so dear to His heart, as often as you bring back stray sheep to the fold, as often as you lead back the prodigal son to the house of his father. When He enters those living temples, adorned by your hands, the heavenly Jerusalem is moved with joy. "When He entered Jerusalem, the whole city was moved."

The angels applaud the success of your zeal, the glory given to Jesus Christ and the happiness procured to your brethren. "*I say to you, there shall be joy before the angels of God, upon one sinner doing penance.*"—(Luc. xv: 10.)

Colloquy with Jesus Christ. Adore, glorify Him, with all the saints and the angels of heaven, and with all the just of earth. Thanking Him for having come to us full of meekness in the mystery of the incarnation, for coming to us every day in a more charming manner, through the sacrament of His body and blood. Ask of Him the grace of immovable constancy in His love, that we may praise Him now, and praise Him in eternity.

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons.* Jesus kindly accepting the ovation extended to Him by a grateful people. Admire His majesty full of sweetness. Though sensible to the marks of affection bestowed upon Him, He thinks on the inconstancy of the human heart.—The apostles, who surround their Master and rejoice in His triumph. Is there for the good priest a satisfaction equal to that of seeing Jesus known, adored and loved?—Contemplate the people, in their delight seeking every means to manifest their devotion to Jesus Christ.—Mary is not there. She wishes to teach me to seek, during this life of trials, not that which flatters, but that which mortifies human nature.

2d Point. *Hear the words.* The disciples of the Savior proclaim His praise, relate His miracles, bless the Son of David, who comes in the name of the Lord. The Pharisees murmur. What does Jesus

Christ answer them? O good Master, shall the tongue of Thy ministers be silent when there is question of praising Thee, of gaining the hearts of men to Thee?

3d Point. *Consider the actions.* The docility of the two disciples. They obey at once.—The people come out of Jerusalem to meet Him who is about to enter it triumphantly. Each one vies to welcome the Messenger of God.—Jesus comes on amid the acclamations of the crowd, which ceases not to bless Him. This triumph is the image of the one which He gains when, through holy communion, He re-enters a soul from which sin had banished Him.

XLV. MEDITATION.

MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK—TRIUMPH OF JESUS CHRIST ENTERING OUR SOULS THROUGH HOLY COMMUNION.

1st.—HOW ARDENTLY DOES THE SAVIOR DESIRE THIS TRIUMPH.

2d.—HOW ARDENTLY WE SHOULD DESIRE IT OURSELVES.

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself Jesus Christ speaking for the first time on the mystery of the Eucharist. Think on the astonishment of those who heard Him propounding a doctrine so strange.

Second Prelude.—Let us beseech Him to enlighten us regarding this ineffable mystery, and to give us a perfect faith and an ardent love for holy communion.

1st Point. *Jesus Christ desires ardently to unite Himself to us through the holy Eucharist.* When one is blessed with a firm will and an ardent desire in the execution of a project, no difficulty seems to be insurmountable, every sacrifice is cheerfully made, every means of success is employed. This consideration aids us to understand how ardently the Son of God desires to give Himself to us through holy communion.

I. Think of the difficulties to be overcome, to attain this end! The God man, living and immortal, was to become the nourishment of

men, permit them to eat His flesh, and to drink His blood! The mere enunciation of this surpasses our reason. Can they imagine anything offering so many impossibilities to our mind? Who are we, O Lord, and who art Thou, that thou shouldst condescend to honor us by an alliance so amazing? The food which I take becomes one thing with me: how could nothingness become one with the Creator of the universe? Thou sayest to me: "*He that eateth Me, shall live by Me.*" To live Thy life, is undoubtedly the most desirable of all blessings; but how is it possible that I should eat Thee? The most exalted of heavenly powers tremble in Thy presence, *tremunt potestates.* How canst Thou say to creatures which are nothing: "*Take and eat, this is My body; drink, this is my blood?*" It is true, I hear the Savior reply: to all My disciples I make this invitation, which astonishes heaven as well as earth. It is verily so, I desire to be thine, as the bread which nourishes thee, as the beverage which quenches thy thirst. "*For my flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.*" To accomplish My desire, I shall have indeed to display the strength of my arm and to multiply wonders. *Through Me it is that kings reign,* and I shall have to obey, not for a few moments only, but until the consummation of the world. I shall have at the voice of My servants, to destroy the substance of the bread, without in the least changing its appearance. I shall have to be at the same time upon thousands of altars, under the appearance of millions of hosts, without any loss of My unity; those hosts shall be divided, and I shall not cease to be indivisible. . . . But My love demands all those miracles, and My power will perform them. This is not all.

II. To realize this design of incomprehensible charity, it was necessary that the Son of God should enter on a long career of humiliations which seemed to be irreconcilable with the brightness of His glorified humanity. Should we have dared to take Him as the food of our souls, if He had not concealed Himself, annihilated Himself more thoroughly yet, than in the mysteries of His incarnation, of His birth and of His death? It is principally at His table, that He shall be the hidden God, and too often alas, the unknown God! How many unfortunate souls will make a sacrilegious abuse of an obscurity, which He knew to be necessary to render Himself accessible to all! But He apprehended more from disturbing the confidence of the just, in permit-

ting a ray of His glory to appear, than from exposing Himself to the outrages of sinners in veiling all the splendor of His holy majesty. As a consequence, His presence will be denied, He will be despised, insulted . . . to this He must resign Himself, if He will unite Himself to us in this sacred intimacy. He forsees it, His heart expects it. "*My heart hath expected reproach and misery.*"—(Ps. lxviii : 21.) And He refuses not to drink the bitter cup ; everything is sacrificed to the desire of identifying Himself with us, and of being able to say of each of us : "*He abideth in Me, and I in him.*"

III. As, moreover, the union which He desired to contract with us, was to be free on our part, it was necessary that He should draw our will to its completion, and that He should triumph over our blind indifference. Let us see what means He has employed to induce us to approach Him. He invites us to this Eucharistic banquet, where everything is so great ; and He who gives it, and the food which He furnishes, and the number of the guests. "He made a great supper . . . and invited many." . . . To the invitation He adds urgent entreaties. "*Compel them to come in.*" This is not enough yet. He makes use of His sovereign authority. He gives us a formal commandment to eat His flesh and to drink His blood. What sanction did He give to this commandment which so well proves the amazing goodness of His heart ? The sanction is a blessed and immortal life to those who will observe it, reprobation and eternal death to any one who will refuse to submit to it.—(J. vi : 54, 55.) O desire, O invincible love of Jesus ! How will you be understood by His diciples, if you are not understood by His priests ?

2d Point. *How ardently we also should desire to unite ourselves to Jesus Christ, through holy communion.* The Prophet Zacharias exclaimed : "*What is the good thing of Him, and what is His beautiful thing, but the corn of the elect, and wine springing forth virgins ?*"—(Zach. ix : 17.) Let us consider the oracle of the same prophet quoted in the Gospel, and let us say to our soul what we are commanded to tell the daughter of Zion : "*Behold thy king comes to the thee meek.*" My king is He who is coming ; He comes to me, He comes for me.

"Behold Thy King." Jesus is my King ; all the royal virtues He possesses in a supreme degree of perfection ; but in this mystery this meekness and tender charity seem to throw the splendor of His other virtues into the shade. *Meek :* He was meek at Bethlehem when He came into

the world; He was meek when He entered Jerusalem. There was nothing in Him or around Him that excited dread; everything led to entire confidence; but He shows more meekness still when He gives Himself to me through holy communion. One would say that He closes His eyes to my defects, and that He will see nothing but my miseries. He comes, does not wait for me to go; He comes not as of old into the world, or to one people, or to one city, but to me, "*He comes to thee meek.*" From the bosom of His Father, He comes into my heart. Ah! How unworthy I am to become His dwelling. How can He dwell with my tepidities, my frivolous thoughts, my negligencies, my innumerable imperfections! He comes for me, for what could He gain by this union? What fitness is there found in this, save that it is proper for goodness to do good?

I understand it, O Lord. In this triumph, all is for me. Thou comest to me with Thy compassionate heart, the assistance of Thy mighty power, the treasures of Thy grace. Thou comest to heal one who is blind and sick, to deliver a captive, and restore to my soul a blessed liberty, by breaking the bonds which attach me to creatures; and to give me peace, by subjecting all my inclinations to Thy law. O Jesus, purify my heart, adorn it with Thy virtues, and make it the seat of Thy empire, and when after a moment the angels will see Thee take possession of it, may they be entitled to say whilst repeating the heavenly Hosanna, that Thy kingdom in me shall not be disturbed, that it shall be without end like the kingdon which Thou has in store for Thy elect. "*And of His kingdom there shall be no end.*"

Reanimate in you the love of holy communion, communicate it to others as far as you can, as a most certain means of pleasing our Lord Jesus Christ, and of saving souls, by communicating to them the very life of the Savior.

1st Point. *Jesus Christ desires ardenty to unite Himself to us in the holy Eucharist.* Let us judge of this desire, by the difficulties which He overcomes, the sacrifices which He makes, the means which He employs. I. A God-man says, "my flesh is meat indeed" . . . the mere announcement surpasses our comprehension. Who are we, O Lord, and who art Thou, that Thou shouldst think of such a union?—I

have willed it, He answers, and if in order to realize it, miracles will have to be multiplied, I will accomplish them. II. The Savior foresees all the outrages to which he exposes Himself, in concealing Himself in this sacrament, as much as will be necessary to permit us to approach Him. He accepts this new cup of sorrows; He sacrifices everything to the desire of uniting Himself to us. III. As the union must be entirely free on our part, consider what He does to attract our will toward it. He invites us to the Eucharistic banquet; to invitations He adds pressing entreaties, nay, He interposes His authority; He commands us to receive communion, threatening eternal death if we resist, promising a life of eternal bliss if we obey.

2d Point. *How ardently we should desire the entrance of our Lord Jesus Christ into our hearts, through holy communion.* "*Behold thy king comes to thee meek.*" Jesus is my King; He comes, He attracts me by His meekness; He comes with His tender compassion, His infinite perfection, the treasure of all His graces. He comes to heal one who is blind and sick, to give me peace, to load me with all blessings.—Come Thou, O blessed King, and when Thou shalt be taking possession of my heart, may Thine angels predict that Thy reign in me shall last forever!

XLVI. MEDITATION.

TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK—JESUS WEEPS OVER JERUSALEM—CONTEMPLATION.

1st.—CONTEMPLATE THE PERSONS CONCERNED.

2d.—HEAR THEIR WORDS.

3d.—CONSIDER THEIR ACTIONS.

FIRST PRELUDE.—"*When the Lord drew near Jerusalem, seeing the city, He wept over it, saying: If Thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to Thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, and thy enemies*

shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straighten thee on every side; and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee, and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation."—(Luc. xix : 41, 44.)

SECOND PRELUDE.—Represent to yourself the road from Bethphage to Jerusalem strewed with leaves of trees, filled with a joyful multitude, and in the midst of them, Jesus Christ advancing toward the city, manifesting pleasure mingled with sadness.

THIRD PRELUDE.—Beg of the heart of Jesus to be united in its sentiments of compassion at the thought of the blindness and fate of sinners.

1st Point. *In Jerusalem, contemplate the enemies of our Savior, and those who are unconcerned about Him.* The dangers and misfortunes which threaten them, affect Him more than the tokens of esteem and affection which He receives. His enemies were aggravated when they heard others speaking of the resurrection of Lazarus, which was the only topic of conversation in Jerusalem, and obtained so much consideration for Him whom they hated ; they feel angry at the satisfaction evinced by the admirers of Jesus, and at their eagerness in going out of the city to meet Him. As to the others, they being entirely taken up by business and pleasures, attach but very little importance to religious questions, and hardly give any attention to the event.- Outside of Jerusalem, see the numerous groups, each endeavoring to surpass the other in the manifestation of their respect and affection toward the glorious Son of David, who had done all things well.—The apostles, happy to see that at last justice had been done to their Master, who had been disregarded so long. He is now honored as He deserved to be. All tongues proclaim His praise, they hear naught but benedictions, they see only signs of joy. Consider Jesus whose presence causes these rejoicings, to whom are addressed all those songs of triumph. He alone discovers a cause for tears amidst those flattering demonstrations. He sees Jerusalem, and He weeps. Ah ! how frivolous are the thoughts of men ! Too often does a serious soul which considers things from the standpoint of faith, find cause for lamenting in matters where others see only cause for rejoicing ! Jesus weeps over a city which is about to crucify Him, and yet we know that He ardently sighs after the moment

on which He will be baptized in His blood. . . . Why does He weep, since He desires the cruel death which will perfect His triumph? I penetrate Thy heart, O Thou most tender, generous friend; Thou lovest Thy sufferings which save us, our evils draw tears from Thy eyes. . . . As for us we are hardly ever moved either by our misfortunes or by Thy love!

2d and 3d Points. *Hear what is said, consider what is done.*—Jesus bringing to His mind the remembrance of all that He had done for the guilty city, and the thought of what she was about to do to fill up the measures of her crimes, is not satisfied with weeping over her; but to teach us, He wishes us to know the cause of His tears. He is grieved, because He foresees how Jerusalem will soon again make an ill use of His graces, by not utilizing the benefit of this visitation. Oh thou ungrateful city, if at least on this day, which is thine still, and which can still be that of thy salvation, thou wouldst know that which I proffer to thee in offering thee peace! "*If thou hadst known the things which are for Thy peace.*" He says no more, His tears and His silence express His sentiments.

It is true, therefore, that the time of mercy is not yet over for this guilty city. But it will soon have passed away; it is only one day. Is life anything more compared with eternity? How rapidly it passes off! If on this day of grace Jerusalem had opened her eyes, if she had welcomed her liberator with the same good will as the multitude, then, indeed, would the triumph of Jesus have been complete. In place of shedding tears, He would have given way to joy. Jerusalem should have been forever the beloved city of the Lord, and the queen of nations. Thus, also, there is no sinner, however near the abyss he may be, but can return to God, and recover peace; but he must will it. Alas, will he be willing? Jerusalem remains obstinate, and becomes hardened. She never sees neither the blessings she loses, nor the misfortunes she incurs, nor the transgressions which defile her, nor the crime she is about to commit. "*But now they are hidden from thy eyes.*" She has neglected the day of salvation. "*The days shall come upon thee.*" Days of wrath shall succeed days of clemency. The eternity of God will replace the day of man. He will visit in His indignation those who refused to receive Him in His visitation of love. . . . "*Thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round,*

and straighten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee, and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." This consideration grieves the heart of Jesus, in the midst of this outburst of joy caused by His presence. Should not His tears have softened the most hardened hearts, and filled the most rebellious with compunction? I conceive that sinners may resist threats and promises: but is it possible to resist the tears of a God? What should we think of a criminal who scorns his judge at the very time that this judge, in tears, seems to say to him: "Spare me the grief I must feel in condemning you, for you see that I love you!"

O priest, study in those Divine tears the evil of impenitence, the disorder of passion, the malice of sin, the folly of worldly joys . . . but above all, the charitable compassion of the heart of Jesus Christ. Learn from His deep affliction, the excess of His tenderness for all men, and the extent of His sorrow when a sinner is lost. Ask of Him grace to weep with Him over the sad state of those sinners whom he loves so much as to die for their salvation, and whom, nevertheless, He will not save, not even in dying for them. . . Labor incessantly; pray and induce others to pray for the conversion of sinners.

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons concerned.* In Jerusalem the enemies of the Savior, and they who are unconcerned about Him. They first show anger at the satisfaction manifested by the admirers of Jesus; the others pay no attention to the passing event. Outside of Jerusalem those numerous groups vieing with each other in the manifestation of their sentiments toward Him who did all things well.—The apostles overjoyed to see that at last justice is done to their Master.—Jesus, the object of the ovation, He alone discovers a reason for tears under those flattering demonstrations. He loves His sufferings which save us; but the blindness which destroys our souls, draws tears from His eyes.

2d and 3d Points. *Hear the words, consider the actions.* Jesus grieves to see how Jerusalem will again misuse this visitation of mercy, which shall be the last one. "This day is thine still, O thou ungrateful city, it could be still the day of thy salvation, ah, wert thou willing to open thine eyes!" He says no more, but His tears speak loud enough.

There is no sinner that cannot return to God ; but he must will it. If he remains obstinate, the days of wrath shall follow the days of clemency ! What must we think of a criminal who scorns his judge, at the very moment that this judge, with tears in His eyes, seems to say to him : "Spare me the sorrow I must feel in condemning you, for you see that I love you !" O priest of God, study in those Divine tears the evil of impenitence, the charitable compassion of Jesus.

XLVII. MEDITATION.

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK—JESUS WASHES THE FEET OF HIS APOSTLES—CONTEMPLATION.

1st.—CONTEMPLATE THE PERSONS CONCERNED.
2d.—HEAR THEIR WORDS.
3d.—CONSIDER THEIR ACTIONS.

FIRST PRELUDE.—"*When supper was done, Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came from God and goeth to God, He rises from supper and layeth aside His garments . . . and began to wash the feet of His disciples.*"—(J. xiii : 2, a. foll.) In vain does St. Peter in his humility endeavor to resist that of the Son of God ; he obeys at last. When the Savior had washed the feet of each of them, He sits down and explains to them what He has just done.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Represent to yourself the cenacle, such as Christ had described it beforehand : "A large room furnished," and the Divine Master at the table with His disciples.

THIRD PRELUDE.—Grant me grace, O Jesus, to imitate Thy examples, to practice the lessons of humility and charity which Thou givest us in this mystery.

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons concerned.* Jesus Christ.—He is conscious of His sovereign authority, of His absolute power. "*Knowing that the Father had given Him all things into His hands.*" He knows what He is, whence He comes, and whither He is going. "*That He came from God and goeth to God.*" Will He avail Himself of this,

to demand the acts of homage that are due to Him? Not at all. However, to impart more effect to the lesson of humility which He is about to give, "*He rises from supper.*" His adorable person appears at this moment to be resplendent with unusual majesty.—The apostles. They are attentive, under the influence of a respectful curiosity. They seem to have a presentiment that some great mystery is about to be accomplished.—Peter. How confused he is when he sees his Master approaching him and preparing to wash his feet.—Judas. He is sombre and anxious looking, one would say that He is insensible in the midst of the general emotion. Let us notice what is about to pass. We should not lose one feature of a scene so touching and instructive.

2d and 3d Points. *Consider what is done; hear the words.* "*Supper being done,*" the apostles being still at the table, "*Jesus rises. He lays aside His garments, and having taken a towel, He girded Himself, after that He putteth water into a basin.*" What is he about to do? How astonished must have been the witnesses of those preparations, and how astonished we should be ourselves when we reflect on them. How is it? Will the Creator of the universe, the Lord of heaven and earth, put Himself at the feet of men, and perform toward them the office of servant? . . . Has Jesus forgotton that He is God, equal in all things to His Father, that His sacred humanity will soon be glorified and that the Lord will say to Him: "*Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool?*" . . . All this he knows; and let us not forget it ourselves, and let the thought of His attributes aid us to penetrate deeper into the mystery of His humiliations.

He comes to Simon Peter, bends His knees before him . . . but Peter rises up in amazement, prostrates himself also and exclaims: "*Lord, dost Thou wash my feet.*" "Thee I adore as the Christ, the Son of the living God; wouldst Thou debase Thyself so as to wash my feet; could I suffer it?" Jesus answers: "*What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.*" O Peter, search not into the depth of My designs. What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know it hereafter. Thou knowest not the purity required of him who will eat and the food which I am about to give; neither dost thou know the dignity the ministries which I have in store for thee. Many are the things hidden from us in the conduct of God toward us. Let us suffer Providence to guide us, let us submit and adore. . . Time, but especially eternity,

shall reveal to us many secrets. At the words of Jesus, Peter looks upon Him ; for a moment he remains undecided, but he soon returns to his former feelings, and cannot bear to see his Master performing toward him the office of a servant. "*Thou shalt never wash my feet.*" Peter's resistance was now going too far. Let us acknowledge ourselves unworthy of God's blessings ; when He commands, our duty is to obey. The humility which refuses His gifts when He offers them, degenerates into pride and presumption. Jesus made an answer which ended the contest : "*If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with Me.*" So thou wilt obey, or I shall cease to consider thee as My disciple; thou shalt be none of Mine. The threat was a dreadful one ; to be separated from Jesus, to have no share in His kingdom ! . . . Peter is frightened. "*Lord*, if it be so, *not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.*" The Savior now corrects another excess, and He instructs those timorous souls which are never satisfied with their past penances, their confessions and preparations. "*Jesus says to him : he that is washed, needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly.*" He who washed himself in the waters of baptism or in those of penance, has no need to be purified, save of those light stains unavoidable to human frailty. The Son of God did then wash the feet of the chief of His apostles, and left him bathed in his tears, filled with Divine love, the heart full of the most pure and sweet consolations. Such are the fruits of obedience which is inseparable of true humility.

From Peter, Jesus passes to the others. I see Him at the feet of Judas. This unfortunate man is unmoved by the action of his Master, and the sight of his own miserable soul. He coolly considers the Lord of Lords prostrate at his feet, which He washes and wipes. . . . . So much condescension and goodness do not soften his heart. Is not my own as hard as his ? In what state do I see every day Jesus Christ on our altar ? He is here destitute of all beauty, deprived of the very form of His humanity, and He hides Himself under ordinary appearances in order to become my food, my victim. . . . When the holy priests and pious laity contemplate Him in this state of annihilation, they are carried away by transports of love, they shed tears of devotion ; but for me, I hold Him in my hands, I receive Him, I possess Him in my heart, and I experience not the least feeling of tender emotion ! . . . O Jesus, heal me of my insensibility if it

be offensive to Thee! If it be merely sent for my confusion, grant me the grace to bear it with patience. Judas had just heard a word which should have pierced His heart: "*You are clean, but not all.*" The traitor is then found out; he cannot doubt it; to warn him it was that Jesus spoke in that manner, and how many other pressing solicitations of grace were used to make him re-enter himself. All was of no use. The most touching expressions of mercy cannot touch him. Behold to what extent passion can debase the soul of an apostle.

After He had washed their feet, and taking His garments, being sat down again He said to them: "*You know what I have done to you?*" Many in the course of ages shall read what I have now done; many will hear it related, and they will not understand it; but do you at least, My beloved apostles, do you understand it? "*You call Me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I, then, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.*" O humility, O charity, virtues so much recommended, so well practiced by Jesus Christ, are you sufficiently prized by His disciples, nay by His very ministers? But it suffices not to know you merely, your presence is to be made known by acts. "*If you know these things, you shall be blessed if you do them.*" This is quite true. In this does happiness consist. "*Blessed.*" Heaven is the price if you do them. How blessed in this very world is the priest of Jesus Christ who humbles Himself with his Master, exercises with Him zeal and charity, immolates himself with Him for the glory of God and the salvation of his brethren. How pure the joys, how abundant the graces concealed under an exterior so modest, engaging, painstaking. This is a beautiful life! I shall realize it in me, if I strive to unite constantly in my conduct a sincere humility to an ardent charity, never hesitating to lower myself to serve my God, whom I recognize in the person of my brethren.

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons concerned.* 1st. Jesus Christ. He is conscious of His own greatness; He does not avail Himself of this, except to give more power to the lesson of humility which He is about to give.—Consider the apostles. A sort of respectful curiosity is depicted in their countenances.—Peter, troubled, confused, when he

sees his Master about to wash his feet.—Judas, looking sombre, anxious, hardened.

2d and 3d Points. *Consider the actions; hear the words.* Supper is over. Jesus rises, lays aside His garments. . . . What shall He do? He comes to Simon Peter. Peter amazed, prostrates himself and exclaims: "*Dost Thou wash my feet, O Lord?*" . . . . . O Peter, "*what I do thou dost not understand now, but thou shalt understand it hereafter.*" Let us leave to God the secrets of the future, and abandon ourselves to His Providence. In vain does Peter continue to resist. His humility is overcome by that of Jesus Christ. From Peter, Jesus passes to the others; behold Him at the feet of Judas, whose heart is not softened by so much goodness. What is the condition of my own heart after holy communion? Jesus having taken His garments, terminates the scene in this solemn language: "*You call me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If, then, I being your Lord and Master have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.*"

XLVIII. MEDITATION.

HOLY THURSDAY—INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST AND OF THE CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD.

"As in the cenacle, there is something more than a repast, so there is also something more than a scrifice. There is the institution of the new priesthood. Our Savior would not have said to men: '*Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you,*' had He not thought of instituting a ministry, through which He would renew to the end of time, what He had now accomplished in presence of these twelve men. Now these are His words to these men whom He hath chosen: '*Do this in commemoration of Me.*' By those words He gives power to them also to change the bread into His body, and the wine into His blood, and this sublime power shall be transmitted through holy ordination in the Church to the end of time. Through the ministry of mortal sinful men, Jesus will continue to work out the

miracle He performed in the cenacle, and whilst He endows His Church with the only one and immortal sacrifice, He gives us, according to His promise, through the bread of heaven, the means to abide in Him, and for Him to abide in us."—(D. Gueranger, Ann. Liturg.)

Those two institutions united together contain two powerful motives of gratitude on which we will meditate to-day. The first of these concerns all the laity: "*Take and eat, this is My body . . . take and drink, this is My blood;*" the second regards the priests in particular: "*Do this in commemoration of Me.*"

1st.—LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST FOR ME IN THE INSTITUTION OF THE MYSTERIES OF THIS DAY.—"*This is My body.*"

2d.—SPECIAL LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST FOR HIS PRIESTS.—"*Do this in commemoration of Me.*"

1st Point. *Love of Jesus Christ for men in the institution of the mysteries of this day.* The Eucharist is the testament of the love of God, who is about to die; it is a gift, the last pledge of His tender love. What is the nature of this gift? To whom is it given? At what time, for what object? Let us confess it; infinite love alone was capable of instituting those sublime inventions partly seen by the prophets. "*Make His works known among the people.*"—(Is. xii: 4.)

I. "*Having loved His who were in the world, He loved them unto the end.*" Everything was ready, and the hour had come at which to accomplish the great design formed by His heart. "*And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread and blessed and broke, and gave to His disciples and said: Take ye and eat, this is my body. And taking the chalice He gave thanks, and gave to them saying: Drink ye all of this, for this is My blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins.*"—(Mat. xxvi: 26.) Can I hear those words and not be filled with respect and enraptured with love?

"*This is My body, this is My blood.*" What is it, then, that Jesus Christ gives us? Something infinitely more than His kingdom. He gives Himself, His power, His goodness, His graces, His merits. . . . The body crucified for us is incorporated with our body; the blood

which has saved the world is mingled with our blood ; our soul is united to that of the Redeemer. His Divinity fills us and consumes all that had been corrupted by sin. The faithful friend dwells within our bosom, and says to us : "*Put me as a seal upon thy heart.*"—(Cant. viii: 6.) O man, seek out and find, if you can, a good which is not contained in this priceless gift, and say if the love of Jesus for you has not made Him prodigal of Himself, since He thought it too little to give you all that He has, if He give you not also all that He is : "*O Deum, si fas est dicere, prodigum sui præ desiderio hominis ! An non prodigum, qui non solum sua sed seipsum impendit ?*"—(Guerric in die Pent.)

II. But for which privileged men shall a favor so astonishing be destined ? Shall it be granted exclusively to the Holy Virgin, to the apostles whom Jesus loved, to some chosen souls whose purity vies with that of Mary and St. John ? Jesus grants it to all His disciples. "*Dedit que discipulis.*" To all the children of His Church, at all times, in all places, to persons of all conditions. No one is excluded, unless he excludes Himself ; for after the accomplishment of this work, the abridgement of all His miraculous works, He commands His ministers to do what He has just done ; to perpetuate this miracle of love, renewing it until the consumation of ages, in every place wherein any of His servants may be found. He has given Himself all to us in His excessive love, and this love of us was not interested.

III. What did He expect of me when He instituted the Eucharist? What were they preparing for Him at the very moment that His heart was, as it were, exhausting itself for them, through generosity and tender affection? It was on the eve of His passion, in the night on which He was betrayed, when the Jews were deliberating on the means to make Him suffer an infamous and cruel death, when Judas sought the occasion to betray Him. It was when men were most deserving of His indignation, that His love for them reaches the very last limits. "*He loved them unto the end.*" He sees the plots against Him. He sees the profanations of the future as well as the attacks of the present day ; nothing can stop Him. "*Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it.*"—(Cant. viii : 7.)

IV. Finally, He has no other aim in this admirable institution, save to conquer excessive perversity by excessive goodness. Men reject

Him. They will soon cry out: "*Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!*" And He yields Himself a captive in the midst of them, so that He may never part from them. They wish, so to say, by the enormity of their crimes, to force Almighty God to strike them without mercy, and He wishes, by a perpetual sacrifice, to place Himself between God and their crimes as a victim of propitiation. They cannot tolerate Him, and He seems not to be able to separate from them; then only will He find Himself nigh enough unto them, when they shall have eat His flesh and drank His blood. He wishes to be the nourishment of their souls,—"*I will comfort you*,"—to communicate to them His Divine life, which will affect their bodies also, and by virtue of which He shall raise them up at the last day. Such are the aims of His love in this mystery. To abide ever with men, to sacrifice Himself continually for them, to unite Himself to them as their food, so as to transform them in Him. In this manner does God accomplish magnificently in favor of His new people, what He had promised to their elders. "*They shall come and give praise in Mount Sion.*" Behold the Church whose cradle was in Jerusalem. "*And they shall flow together to the good things of the Lord, for the corn and wine . . . and their souls shall be as a watered garden, and they shall be hungry no more.*" Behold all the blessings of God contained in the Eucharist. "*And I will fill the souls of the priests with fatness, and My people will be filled with My good things.*"—(Jer. xxxi. 12, 14.)

2d Point. *Love of the Savior for His ministers in the institution of the mysteries of this day.* The Eucharist, which constitutes the riches of the Church, is the special treasure of the priesthood. "*O quam magnum et honorabile est officium sacerdotum, quibus datum est Dominum majestatis verbis sacris consecrare, labiis benedicere, manibus tenere, ore proprio sumere et cæteris ministrare?*"—(Im. l. iv., c. 11.) What a field opened to most holy reflection in those words: *Consecrare, benedicere, tenere, sumere, ministrare?*

Over whom do we exercise a power so extensive? Over the Lord of all majesty. Was there ever a function so Divine? How do you acquit yourself of it? With what interior recollection, with what piety do you pronounce the sacred form which renders you like unto the eternal Father begetting His Son, unto Jesus Christ reproducing and immolating Himself through your ministry? Do then, in commemora-

tion of Him, the great thing which He did in the cenacle, and which He renews every day on the altar with so much love for you; for you are one of those to whom He said: "*Do this in commemoration of Me.*" Whenever you celebrate the holy mysteries, hear Him repeating to you this sweet invitation: "Think of Me, O you whom I chose to be My representative, My friend, My consoler, another Myself. Nearly all forget Me; you at least be mindful of My blessings; remember in particular My immolation on Calvary." "*As often as ye do those things, ye shall do them in remembrance of Me.*"

Through the consecration, the Word incarnate, for our redemption, has been rendered present on the altar. There He is, under your eyes, destitute of movement, nay apparently of life, though He gives life to all that breathes. O priest of God, what use do you make of Him? You offer Him for the living and for the dead, for yourself and the salvation of the whole world. Uniting yourself to the intentions which He had on the cross, and which He still has on the altar, you look up to heaven as He did in order to glorify God, to adore Him with the saints, to thank Him with them. You look down upon earth in order to sanctify it, by drawing down the graces which He decreed for men; you consider with compassion the suffering Church which you can console so efficaciously. How often in the course of the sacrifice do you not bless Him from whom all benedictions flow? How often do you not touch Him whom the angels can hardly contemplate? . . . Then you take this heavenly bread, you give it. *Ut sumant, et dent cæteris.* You dispose of Him as a thing which is yours.

On this day, honor with special devotion the most holy sacrament and the sacred priesthood. Recall to mind the blessed moment on which you received powers so wonderful: *Accipe potestatem offerre sacrificium Deo, missasque celebrare, tam pro vivis quam prò defunctis, in nomine Domini.* Make use of this power with so much devotion and fervor, that you may be at the last day one of those priests whom Jesus shall praise before the whole of mankind, because they will have duly venerated the mysteries of His body and blood: *Deus qui nobis sub sacramento mirabili, passionis tuæ memoriam reliquisti; tribue, quæsumus, ita nos corporis et sanguinis tui sacra mysteria venerari, ut redemptionis tuæ fructum in nobis jugiter sentiamus. Qui vivis et regnas in sæcula sæculorum.*

Spend with great recollection and fervor these three last days of the fast of Lent, and thus complete your preparation for the great solemnity of Easter: "*Per immensam hanc charitatem tuam, Domine, peto gratiam efficacem, ad emendandos mores et honorificandum ministerium meum. Da mihi spiritum compunctionis, præsertim in hoc triduo sacro. Plorans nunc plorat sancta mater Ecclesia, et lacrymæ in maxillis ejus. Pro aliis et præ aliis peccatoribus oportet me lugere ad pedem crucis tuæ et implorare misericordiam tuam. Obsecro, te, bone Jesu, per amarissimam passionem tuam, ut me, meosque omnes, digneris facere participes infinitorum meritorum tuorum. Amen.*"—(Scut. Fid.)

1st Point. *Love of Jesus for men in the institution of the mysteries of this day.* The Eucharist is a gift. What is its nature? To whom is it given? When, and for what end? What Jesus gives here is infinitely greater than His kingdom. He gave all that He had. He would give all that He is, Divinity, humanity! . . . To whom does He make the gift? To all the children of His Church, of all times, of all places, of all conditions. What time does He choose to accomplish this chief work of His loving heart? The very night on which He will be betrayed by Judas to His enemies, by His enemies to Pilate, who will give Him up to the executioners. Finally, what is His object? To conquer excess of perversity by excess of goodness. They will soon cry out: "*Away with Him, away with Him,*" and He makes Himself, as it were, a captive in chains in the midst of them. They cannot tolerate Him. He cannot separate from them. Until the end of ages, they shall have near them the tabernacle wherein He dwells, the altar on which He is immolated, the holy table on which He gives Himself as the nourishment of their souls.

2d Point. *Love of Jesus Christ for His ministers in the institution of the mysteries of this day.* The Eucharist, which is the riches of the whole Church, is the special treasure of the priesthood. O priest! *Quibus datum est Dominum majestatis verbis sacris consecrare, labiis benedicere, manibus tenere, ore proprio sumere et cæteris ministrare!* Was there ever a function so holy? How do you discharge its duties? On this day honor the most holy sacrament and the sacred priesthood with extraordinary devotion.

XLIX. MEDITATION.

HOLY FRIDAY—"ALL IS CONSUMMATED."

In your preparatory prayer, offer to the adorable Trinity all the faculties of your soul, that they may be employed in His service during this day, but especially during this exercise. Let us offer to God the agony and the last breath of the Savior. Never was God so much glorified as on this day. Never is His heart so much filled with compassion on the miseries of men, as when we celebrate this sorrowful anniversary. Prayer on this day may obtain miracles; hence the Church in her desolation, understanding the power of her tears united to the blood of her Divine spouse, extends her maternal solicitude to all the wants of the whole human family. All men on this day, the heretics, the schismatics, nay, the perfidious Jews themselves, have a share in the solemn supplications she addresses to God at the foot of the cross of His Son.

The meditation might be taken in the first volume page 724: *Contemplation* of Jesus on the cross; or we may take for its subject these words full of mysteries: *It is consummated.*

1st.—WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THAT WORD ON THE LIPS OF JESUS EXPIRING?

2d.—WHAT SHALL BE THE MEANING OF IT ON THE LIPS OF THE JUST AND OF THE SINNERS AT THE MOMENT OF THEIR DEATH?

1st Point. *In the death of Jesus all is consummated,* by the fulfillment of His Father's will, His own immolation, and His great work of the redemption of men. I. All is consummated by the accomplishment of God's will regarding His Son, when He sent Him into the world. What the Word at the time of His incarnation had announced,—*Behold I come, O Lord, to do Thy will,*—He declares when dying that He has accomplished. He has observed in every point the law which His

Father had laid upon Him, and which He had lovingly accepted. The figures are realized, the prophecies are accomplished. There is not a circumstance of His nativity, of His life, and of His death, but was fully conformable to what had been written of Him in the book of the eternal decrees. "*In the head of the book it is written of Me, that I should do Thy will, O God.*" In giving up His life amidst so many sorrows, He may comfort Himself with the thought that He has fulfilled His mission in doing and suffering all that was in accordance with the Divine will. "*I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.*"—(J. xvii: 4.) *It is consummated.*

O men, hear your Master, look at Him living and dying; learn of Him how you ought to live, and how you ought to die. Submit in everything to the will of God. Such ought to be your life and such your death, if you will be His disciples. Oh Lord, am I justified in saying that hitherto I have been one of them? If I had to die this day, would I dare to call on heaven and earth to witness that I have accomplished Thy will, all Thy wills, and fulfilled Thy views regarding my person? "*I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do.*"

II. All is consumated as regards the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The Jews can no longer outrage and torture Him. The hour of the power of darkness is over; the passion is ended. The Son of God has drank to the very dregs the chalice prepared for Him. O Jesus, what sacrifice is it that Thou hast consummated for my salvation? Enable me to measure its extent. My son, consider the state in which thou seest Me on this gibbet. My life is ebbing away, the last drops of My blood are flowing. Recall to mind the sufferings and reproaches I had to undergo before coming to this point; remember the torture of My body, the sadness of My soul, the anguish of My heart. For love of thee and to obey My Father, I have sacrificed everything, My rest, My liberty, My honor, My life. I offer Myself as a holocaust, and do not complain that I gave too high a price to purchase thy eternal salvation, provided thou wilt respond to My love. . . Thy charity, O Lord, urges me. On this day, when Thy heart showed itself so generous for me, I will also consummate the sacrifice of my whole self to the glory of Thy Father and to Thine. So often I began to offer it, but never accomplished it thoroughly. At the foot of Thy cross on the day of Thy death, it is impossible to refuse Thee anything; for Thee alone it is possible to live.

"*That they also who live, may not now live for themselves, but unto Him who died for them.*"—(II Cor. v : 15.) "*En servus tuus ego, paratus ad omnia, quoniam non desidero mihi vivere sed tibi; utinam digne et perfecte.*"—(Im. l. iii, c. 15.)

III. For the Son of God all is consummated in regard to the work of our redemption. The ransom of the captives is paid, sin is destroyed, the anger of God is appeased, grace has been acquired, the Church is founded, the priesthood and the sacraments are instituted. . . Let us understand the warnings of our dying God; it is consummated. "My part in the work of your salvation I have accomplished, now accomplish yours. You have My word to instruct you, My examples to direct you, My grace to assist you. If you employ rightly the means of sanctification which I leave you, you shall, with Me, attain your happiness."

O priest of God, how glorious the part assigned to you in the work of the universal redemption, since it is you who applies its benefit to souls. Consider those souls through the wounds of Jesus Christ. They shall then appear to you to be so precious that you will spare nothing in order to save them. You will say with St. Paul: "*I fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh.*" It suffices not that Christ has suffered in His Divine flesh; He must suffer in His mystical body, of which the priests are the principal members: "*For His body which is the Church.*"—(Col. i : 24.)

2d Point. *At the moment of death everything shall be consummated for the sinner and for the just, but in quite a different manner. It is consummated.* A terrifying truth for the man who was rebellious to grace during life, and is now impenitent at death. For Him all is consummated. Riches, pleasures, honors, all is past; projects, business, amusements, all is over; body, soul, mind, health, relatives, friends, all is lost. . . There is nothing left to him save his crimes, and the frightful punishments which now God will inflict for them. He dies, and he enters a region wherein everything is unknown to him, where he will find naught but a terrible judgment and an eternal hell.

It is consummated. A reflection full of charms and consolation for the faithful Christian, but especially for the good priest, at the moment of his death. All is consummated. I have fought according to my strength, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, I have loved the Church and served it, and I die in its bosom; I have observed the

Law of God, and had no greater desire than to procure its observance by others. I have suffered and carried my cross after Jesus. . . . . Faults, indeed, I had committed, but I have cleansed myself in the blood of the Lamb, and I have endeavored to deserve mercy by multiplying works of mercy. If there remain for me some debts to be paid, my Savior made Himself my security, His satisfaction is mine the moment that I unite my sacrifice to His ; from Him I expect the crown of justice. "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ; as to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice.*"—(II Tim. iv : 7, 8.) Blessed is the death which terminates such a life and is accompanied with sentiments of this kind. In order to be worthy, it suffices not to give oneself to God fervently ; perseverance is necessary. But when could we more surely obtain it than on this day, when God is, as it were, bound to subscribe to all our prayers.

O Jesus, be Thou my strength and my support, assist me during my whole life, and grant that at death I may repeat confidently the word of victory : "*It is consummated.*" "*Largire mihi donum perseverantiæ finalis, et specialem hanc gratiam, ut indefesso studio de virtute ad virtutem progrediar, ut ardua vocationis meæ negotia rite conficiam, et antequam moriar, sacro Viatico muniar ad cursum meum feliciter consummandum, ut in hora mortis meæ confidenter possim dicere : Consummatum est ; nec aliud mihi restat, nisi æternitas undequaque beata. Amen.*"—(Scut. Fid.)

1st Point. *In the death of Jesus all the designs of God are consummated in His immolation and in the redemption of men.* I. He has punctually observed the law which His Father laid upon Him, and which He had lovingly accepted. He may comfort Himself in the midst of His sorrows with the thought that He has faithfully accomplished His mission. Would my conscience permit me to say the same of myself if I had to die on this day? All is consummated in the case of the immolation of the Savior. . . . O my Master, grant me to measure the extent of Thy sacrifice. . . . I will, on this day, dedicate my whole person to the glory of Thy Father and of Thine. Whoever lives, can live now no longer but for Thee. II. All is consummated for Jesus Christ in the work of our redemption. Hear Him saying to

you: My part is accomplished; to you, My disciples, it remains to accomplish yours.

2d Point. *All shall be consummated for the sinner and for the just at the moment of their death.* This is a truth terrifying for the man rebellious to grace in his life, and impenitent at his death. Riches, pleasures, all is past; body, soul, health, hope, all is lost. O death, truly frightful.—Truth full of comfort at death, for the priest who shall have fulfilled his requirements. *All is consummated.* I have no more enemies to overcome, all my combats are ended. Nothing remains to be done save to receive from Thy hands the reward promised to fidelity. O my God, give me the grace to be able to repeat with confidence at my death this word of victory: All is consummated.

L. MEDITATION.

HOLY SATURDAY—THE SEPULCHRE OF JESUS CHRIST.

1st.—THE LAST TERM OF HIS HUMILIATIONS.

2d.—THE BEGINNING OF HIS GLORY.

3d.—IT IS FOR US A SCHOOL OF PERFECTION.

1st Point. *Jesus annihilated in His sepulchre.* After His death He is taken down from the cross, deposited for a few moments in the arms of His inconsolable mother, who bedews the sacred body with her tears; and next they give to this body the funeral honors bestowed on the remains of other mortals. . . . For a God, these honors are the lowest degree of humiliation; and on this day we see fully justified this astonishing expression of St. Paul, "*He debased Himself.*"—(Ph. II: 7.) Through the mystery of the incarnation, God had, as it were, annihilated Himself in humanity, since man is nothing compared with God; but in the sepulchre the annihilation is more complete.

Let us not forget that this inanimate body is still the body of a God, that the Divinity was never separated from it. During the Savior's life, God lived and acted in it, through it He manifested His glory, by

performing works which were evidently Divine. In the sepulchre there is a God-man destitute of life, destitute of action; a God-man in whom nothing of the Godhead appears, neither power, wisdom, empire over nature, nay, in whom nothing of man's nature appears, as movement, speech, or feeling. Such is the state of a God in the grave. Is it not the lowest stage of His humiliations, and the crowning, so to say, of His annihilations? Of this we find no image, save in holy communion.

In this sacrament not the Divinity alone, but the humanity also has disappeared; should we not say in a manner still more striking than in the grave, for in the grave there was at least the exterior form of a human body. Let us adore these annihilations of Jesus Christ, which are new evidences of His love for us. If in the holy Eucharist, He debased, and concealed Himself to such an extent, it was only to impart to us the confidence that we needed to approach Him, to unite ourselves to Him so far as to eat His flesh and drink His blood. How blessed you are, O priest of God, in having the privilege to bury Him every day in your heart, and to prepare for Him in the souls of the faithful, sepulchres wherein He is well pleased. Continue, O priest of God, to purify consciences, place within the souls of men the aroma of those virtues, which by their perfume will embalm the Savior, and by their effects, by the good odor of the edification which they exhale, will also embalm our neighbor. Be always careful, however, to dispose yourself to treat those holy mysteries in a worthy manner. From the arms of the cross, Joseph and Nicodemus received the Divine body deprived of life. From heaven you receive it, not only living, but giving life and immortality. "*Bone Jesu, tribue mihi pauperi servo tuo necessaria virtutum ornamenta, velut aromata, ut digne te sepeliam in præcordiis meis. Dealba me et munda cor meun ab omni criminum macula, ut conscientia pura, tanquam in sindone munda te recipiam: et qui voluisti in monumento novo sepeliri, da mihi cor novum et spiritum novum, ut innovato quotidie pietatis ardore sacris operari valeam.*"—(Scut. Fid.)

2d Point. *The sepulchre of Jesus Christ, the beginning of His glory.* We can but recognize the views of Providence in permitting that the entrance to the sepulchre should be closed by rolling against it a very heavy stone; that a guard should be put about it, and that it should be sealed with the seal of public authority. God desired that all those pre-

cautions would serve to establish the death and burial of His Son. He designed thereby to refute by anticipation the ridiculous story of the taking away of the body, and give the resurrection an evidence of certainty which would triumph over the most obstinate incredulity. . . . Behold here the accomplishment of the Prophecy, "*and His sepulchre shall be glorious.*"—(Is. xi: 10.) Let the vanity of men extend so far as their tombs, let them engrave their names and their deeds in marble, this marble will declare that they are no more, that they will never be anything but a handful of dust. Thou alone, O my Master, findest in Thy burial the principle of the triumph which the Father had decreed in Thy favor. Humiliated in the sepulchre, Thou art glorified through the same. "*Having become obedient unto death . . . wherefore also God exalted Him.*" . . . Heaven and earth are about to rejoice at this triumph. Blessed are Thy true disciples and faithful servants; they shall share it one day with Thee.

3d Point. *The grave of Jesus Christ is for us a school of perfection.* It is of the adorable dead, rather than of the just Abel, that it should be said, "*being dead He yet speaketh.*"—(Heb. xi: 4.)

Let us gather up some of the lessons that Jesus gives us in this mystery. I. He dwells in darkness, and He tells us to love the hidden life. He had said so to us in the womb of His mother, in the stable of Bethlehem, in the solitude of Nazareth; but He proclaims it more energetically yet in the obscurity of His grave. The hidden life offers so many means for preserving oneself in innocence! . . . It is so easy in that state to think on God, and to walk in His presence! Is not this the means to become perfect? "*Walk before Me and become perfect.*"—(Gen. xvii: 1.)[1]

II. We admire with what docility Jesus obeys, and gives Himself up to those who have assumed the duty of His interment. It is a dead body. . . . But how much more admirable the obedience He renders to His ministers in the sacrament of His love, permitting them to dispose of Him as they chose, to raise Him up, to lower Him down, to carry Him whithersoever they like. His apparent insensibility in the Eucharistic state, causes me to envy the state of those

1. An interior soul will feel attracted on this day to meditate on this text of St. Paul to the Colossians: "You are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear who is your life, then you also shall appear with Him in glory."—(Coloss. iii: 3, 4.)

souls which are really dead to the world and to themselves, and are insensible to anything save to the interests of God. When shall I be able to say with as much truth as St. Paul, "*The world is crucified to me, and I to the world?*"—(Gal. vi: 14.) III. The Divinity ever united to the body of Jesus Christ in the grave, preserves it from all corruption. Obliged, as I am, to live in the world in the midst of sinners, I stand in need, O my God, of a sort of a miracle to remain pure and entirely free from sin. This miracle Thou wilt perform if I apply myself to remain inseparably united to Thee, living by Thee and with Thee only. IV. Finally, in this do I see a great prodigy in the sepulchre of Jesus Christ, that He preserves therein His whole strength, so that He will shortly rise out of it triumphing over death in the very empire of death. This prodigy Thou workest also in Thy good priests, O Lord. Powerless of themselves, they receive power of Thee to overcome the most tyrannical passions, to break the stoutest bands, to overcome nature, and to enter with Thee the state of a blessed immortality. In this manner are accomplished with Thee the designs of Thy mercy. Thy goodness gave them grace to know the mysteries of the incarnation of Thy Son, to honor His mysteries, to observe His precepts, to imitate His examples . . . . and then, by His passion and cross, Thou leadest them to the glory of His resurrection: *Gratiam tuam, quæsumus, Domine, mentibus nostris infunde; ut qui . . . Christi Filii tui incarnationem cognovimus, per Passionem ejus et crucem ad resurrectionis gloriam perducamur.*

In ending to-day the forty days fast of Lent, recall to your mind what you have done during this blessed season, either for God, for your neighbor or for yourself, and what more you could have done. Offer as a satisfaction for your faults all the sufferings and humiliations of Jesus Christ, and dispose yourself to celebrate worthily the feast of Easter, which St. Gregory calls the "solemnity of solemnities, because it lifts us up from earth and takes us up to heaven, enabling us to enjoy it even now by faith, hope and charity."—(Hom. 23, in Evan.)

"*Nunc autem in hoc ultimo quadragesimalis jejuni die, supplico tibi, bone Jesu, ut omnia pœnitentiæ opera benigne suscipias, quæ huc usque peregi, tibique jam denuo humiliter offero. Haud equidem dignus sum lætitia paschali, quia quadragenariam hanc abstinentiam minus accurate servavi, nec corpus meum ad Ecclesiæ præscriptum satis severe*

maceravi. Condona mihi negligentias meas per merita amarissimæ Passionis tuæ. Dirige me meosque omnes, ut tandem, emenso peregrinationis nostræ itinere, ad æternam cœlestis patriæ festivitatem pervenire mereamur. Amen."—(Scut. Fid.)

1st Point. *The sepulchre, the lowest stage of the humiliations of Jesus Christ.* We cannot imagine a greater humiliation for a God. Holy communion, however, is its counterpart. In this sacrament not only the Godhead, but the humanity have disappeared, and in one sense more fully than in the burial; for in the sepulchre, at least, is seen the exterior form of a human body. In lowering Himself so much in the Eucharist, He had no other object in view than to inspire us with the confidence which we needed to eat His flesh and to drink His blood. Let us prepare for Him in our hearts a sepulchre wherein He may love to dwell. Joseph and Nicodemus received the Divine body deprived of life; we receive Him living, and imparting immortality.

2d Point. *Annihilation of Jesus Christ in the grave, the beginning of His glory.* The death and burial of our Lord having been legally established, and this with extraordinary care and precautions, it follows that the fact of the resurrection is evident, and here we have the prediction accomplished, that "His sepulchre shall be glorious." O Jesus most deeply humiliated in the grave. From this very grave Thy glory will emanate.

3d Point. *The grave of Jesus Christ is for us a school of perfection.* I. From the darkness wherewith He surrounds Himself, He says to us to love the hidden life. . . . It is so favorable to innocence, and progress in virtue. II. It is a beautiful model of obedience. It is a dead body. I still much more admire the obedience He yields to the priest, who disposes of Him as He chooses. III. The body was proof to corruption, because it was united to the Divinity. Thou, O Lord, wilt make me incorruptible in the midst of the world, if I remain constantly united to Thee by charity. IV. Jesus in the grave preserves all His strength, and I, through my union with Thee, will receive power to overcome passions and hell, and, like Thee, through the cross I will rise glorious from the grave.

LI. MEDITATION.

EASTER DAY—CONTEMPLATION.

1st.—CONTEMPLATE THE PERSONS CONCERNED.

2d.—HEAR THEIR WORDS.

3d.—CONSIDER THEIR ACTIONS.

Hæc dies quam fecit Dominus. Alleluia. Of all the days, this is the one to which He has imparted the most of splendors. There is no other day so glorious to Himself, so full of benefits for us; for the miracle of the resurrection confirms all the miracles performed by Jesus Christ. God will now receive due honor on earth, and man will be saved. We should, therefore, yield to feelings of joy. This joy, however, should be pure and holy like its object. *Exultemus et lætemur in ea.*

FIRST PRELUDE.—Mary Magdalen and her companions went early in the morning to visit the grave. Suddenly a great earthquake was felt. The Angel of the Lord, having rolled back the stone which closed the entrance to the sepulchre, was seated upon it. At His sight the guards were astounded, and were paralyzed with fear. He quieted the holy women, and after convincing them that the Savior had risen, told them to go, and announce the fact to His disciples.—(Mat. xxviii; Marc. xvi; Luc. xxiv; Jo. xx.)

SECOND PRELUDE.—Represent to yourself the place of the burial, the grave open, the great excitement amongst the disciples, and the holy women going to and returning from the sepulchre.

THIRD PRELUDE.—O Jesus, victorious over death and hell, I rejoice at Thy joy, I applaud Thy triumph; the glory of the head reflects on the members. Grant that I may rise with Thee, by leaving to-day the grave of my illusions and of all my spiritual infirmities.

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons.*—The angel. His countenance is as lightning for the enemies of Jesus, but most kind for those

who love Him. His garment possesses the whiteness of snow ; it is the symbol of the pure life of a soul which has risen.—The holy women hurrying to the grave : *Valde diluculo.* Let us remember the warning which the Church gave us during Lent : *Non sit vobis vanum mane surgere ante lucem : quia promisit Dominus coronam vigilantibus.* They knew that it was guarded by armed men, but this they do not mind ; that a heavy stone closed its entrance . . . neither do they slacken their steps on this account. They indeed ask one another : "*Who will roll back the stone.*" But they still persevere in their purpose. What is it that stimulates and sustains their courage? And what is it that makes me so timid and inactive? Why does the least obstacle frighten me, when there is question of undertaking something for the glory of God? Oh if I had the same love!—Consider now the chief priests, and all those who abetted the death of Jesus Christ. See in their countenances mingled sentiments of wonder, fear and anger whilst they listen to the story of the affrighted and trembling soldiers. The cause of joy to the good is the cause of terror to the wicked. Must not Caiphas be afraid lest the risen Christ may appear to him, to reproach him for his injustice and hypocrisy, and to ask him if he deserved to be accused of blaspheming, when he called himself the Son of God? Is not Herod annoyed, when he considers how he treated Him as a fool, who has now triumphed over death? He thinks of the white garment of ignominy cast upon Christ. How much ashamed must Pilate be for the base cowardice which made him forsake one whose innocence he had proclaimed, and whose innocence is now divinely proved? What must be the emotion of all Jerusalem at the news of such an event, at the sight of all those dead risen from their graves, who reveal their identity to a great number of persons?—(Mat. xxvii : 52, 53.)—Consider the disciples and the apostles ; they were sad at first, because they were incredulous. Their first impression was one of terror, when they heard about the resurrection of the Savior.—(L. xxiv : 22.) They think that their enemies have stolen the body to accuse the apostles of the theft, and to afford them a chance to treat them as they had treated their Master. They meet one another with troubled, downcast countenances. But their doubts disappear as the light of truth enters their souls. their faces brighten up, and their hearts expand with delight.—Finally, contemplate Jesus Christ in His new state. How sweet His majesty, how

Divine His beauty ! Do you recognize Him who excited so much compassion in you in the pretorium and on the cross? See in His glory the pledge of the reward which awaits you if you remain faithful.

2d Point. *Hear the words.* Hear the words of the angel tranquillizing the holy women and inviting them to enter the sepulchre. There remained nothing now claiming reverence except the sacred linen. "*Fear not*, he says to them, I know what motives lead you to this spot, I know what you desire. The enemies of Christ alone need to tremble; you love Him. Be calm and confident. *You seek the Savior who was crucified. He is not here; He is risen as He had foretold. Draw near, behold the place where they laid His body.*" *He is risen!* What a sound of triumph in those words ! How it will re-echo through the universe ! How many mouths will repeat it, with joyous *alleluia.*—Hear the relation of Magdalen, of her companions, and of the disciples who were the first to see the Savior in this glorified state ! The truth of this as it becomes known is accompanied by so much the greater joy that they had a longer time refused to give it credence. Hear the chief priests astounded as they are ; they teach the guards the role they will have to play to deceive the public concerning an event which covers them with shame, and draws down upon them the execration of all men. "*Say that the disciples came during the night, and took away the body whilst you were asleep.*" Yes ! give as witnesses men who were asleep and who nevertheless saw and heard what was passing during their sleep ! O human wisdom, how surprising thy folly, when thou pretendest to prevail against God, and to put an obstacle to His designs !

3d Point. *Consider the actions.* What does Jesus Christ do? He completes magnificently the important work for which He had come down on earth. By His death He had atoned for our sins. By His resurrection He justifies us. *He was "delivered up for our sins and rose again for our justification.*"—(Rom. iv : 25.) He justifies our faith, our hope, and our love ; our faith, for this miracle confirms all the others and appends to His doctrine the seal of infallibility ; our hope, for He gives us in His triumph the pledge of a similar one, which it is our power to obtain if we are so disposed ; our love, since we now know through this stupendous miracle, who He is, who humbled Himself and suffered so much for our sake.

What is the conduct of the apostles? They tremble, they hide, they refuse to believe. Some of them even refuse obstinately to give credence to an event which they must have expected, since they adored Him who had so often and so clearly predicted it to them. They teach us by their timidity and their disposition to incredulity, how much we have need of grace to believe; and later on, they will prove to us, by their labors and sufferings, what wonderful things this same faith can enable us to perform.

What is the conduct of the enemies of our Savior? They close their eyes to the light. After hearing the deposition of the soldiers they could entertain no doubt concerning the resurrection of the Savior, nor consequently concerning His divinity. They had exclaimed: "*If He is the Son of God, let God come and deliver Him.*" God has delivered Him, not out of their hands only, but also from the bands of death. Of this the soldiers appointed to guard the sepulchre are the unimpeachable witnesses. They would avow their crime, if pride were capable of retrogression. They impart to the truth of the miracle a more striking splendor of certainty, precisely by aiming at its suppression.

Colloquy with Jesus Christ, risen from the dead.—Congratulate Him on His glorious triumph, and make the victory of your chief your own triumph. Our beloved chieftain gained this triumph for His members as well as for Himself. Ask Him to grant you spiritual joy and grace to enter this new life which should be the principal fruit of this mystery.—(Rom. vi: 4.)—Participate in the happiness of Mary, who in a manner rises in the person of her Divine Son. *Regina cœli, lætare.*

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons.* The angel whose aspect inspires terror to the enemies of Christ, and gladness and confidence to His friends. The holy women going in haste to the sepulchre; neither the thought of the weighty stone nor the presence of the guards can shake their confidence.—The chief priests and the other persecutors of Jesus Christ. What are the feelings of Caiphas, of Herod, of Pilate? . . . . The disciples. In the first place they are sad, because they are incredulous; their countenance, however, brightens up, in proportion as faith enters their soul.

Finally, Jesus Christ in His new state. . . . Do you recognize Him whose sight on the cross inspired you with so much compassion?

2d Point. *Hear the words.* Those of the angel who re-assures the holy women. Fear not, terror is for the enemies of Christ alone. He is risen. . . . Hear also the words of the chief priests bribing the guards. Say that His disciples came during the night and took away the body whilst you slept? O human wisdom, how remarkable thy folly!

3d Point. *Consider the actions.* What is the conduct of Jesus Christ? He completes His great work in a glorious manner. He justifies our faith, our hope and our love. What is the conduct of the disciples? They tremble, they hide. . . . By their disposition to incredulity, they show that we have absolute need of grace in order to believe; later on they will prove of what magnanimity faith can make us capable. What is the conduct of the enemies of Christ? They close their eyes, they give the truth of resurrection the most splendid evidence of certainty, precisely by plotting its suppression.

LII. MEDITATION.

GLORY OF JESUS CHRIST IN HIS RESURRECTION.

All in the person of Jesus Christ, His body, His soul, His Divinity had been, as it were, annihilated by the ignominies and sufferings of His passion. In His resurrection everything is repaired.

1st.—GLORY OF HIS SOUL.

2d.—GLORY OF HIS BODY.

3d.—GLORY OF HIS DIVINITY.

1st Point. *The soul of Jesus Christ glorified in His resurrection.* We beheld this soul in the garden of Olives and on the cross, plunged in an abyss of sadness and desolation. On this day it comes victorious out of limbo. When in the garden, it had asked for the removal of the

bitter cup; it needed sustenance and strength from an angel; but to-day it has power, and spreads around consolation and happiness. See with how much joy it inundated the hearts of the just in limbo, which were there sighing for the day on which heaven would be opened to them. Our Savior's soul comes to tell them that this day is near at hand, that already the redemption is accomplished. Many of them accompany it, and form its cortege when that soul returns to be reunited to its body. Through their own resurrection, they will be the first witnesses of the Savior's resurrection. It shows them the sacred body, haggard, covered with wounds, stretched in the grave. How tender their compassion, their gratitude, their love, when they consider those deep, countless wounds, which reveal the extent of the sufferings of the Son of God for their redemption. We can easily imagine them exclaiming at this sight: "*So much dost Thou love me, O Lord, that Thou seemest to have nothing but hatred for Thyself.*"—(St. Bonav.)

Now the blessed soul is reunited to its body. It now rejoices exceedingly at its ability to reward it for all its sacrifices, and to procure for it more splendor and delight than it brought abuses and torments: "*Resurrectionis gloria sepelivit morientis injuriam.*"—(St. Chrys. serm. 75.) God exacts humiliation only with a view for future elevation. Do thou then, O my soul, accept all the humiliations he is pleased to send thee, during the time of thy exile on earth; be willing to be buried in darkness, despised, placed below all others; the day of thy glory will come.

2d Point. *The body of Jesus Christ glorified in His resurrection.* This sacred body had been "bruised" for our sins.—(Is.) Under the bruises which disfigured it, could they have recognized the most beautiful amongst the sons of men? By the resurrection it has been marvelously transformed. Not only is it freed from the laws of mortality and suffering; it is, moreover, adorned, in an incomparable degree, with all the prerogatives of glorified bodies. Its wounds are changed into sources of light, and they lend it a splendor which surpasses infinitely that which will be granted the bodies of the other elect. The angels had adored their King at His entrance into this world; to-day they adore Him with increased religious transports, when they see Him come to life anew from the very embrace of death. Why should they not sing out the *Gloria in excelsis Deo* around His sepulchre as they had done around

His manger? Why should not the patriarchs, the prophets, all the just, repeat in concert the canticle revealed to St. John: "*The lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and Divinity, and wisdom and strength, and honor and glory and benediction.*"—(Ap. v: 12.)

The Son of God, announcing Himself this triumph, through the royal prophet, had expressed His deep gratitude to His Father, who was to crown Him with such everlasting glory. "*Thou hast brought forth, O Lord, My soul from hell. Thou hast saved Me from those who go down into the pit. . . . In the evening weeping shall have place, and in the morning gladness. . . . Thou has turned for Me My mourning into joy. Thou hast cut My sackcloth, and hast compassed Me with gladness, to the end that My glory may sing to Thee.*"—(Ps. xxix.)

How good a Master God is, and how generously He rewards all that is done or suffered to serve Him. Jesus Christ died and rose again, showing to us in His passion what we should now suffer for truth, and showing in His resurrection what we must hope from it in eternity.—(St. Aug.) We weep during the night of this sorrowful life: in the morning, however, at the first rays of the eternal day, the mourning will be turned into joy, and this joy will be without any alloy of sorrow; it will be pure and abundant; it will last during all eternity, whilst the afflictions of this life are short and light; our tears themselves being sweetened by the hope of reward. This is the place to learn the nature of our self-love. Alas, by refusing to bear the mortification of Jesus Christ in my body, I deprive it of immense glory and incomprehensible delights in eternity.

3d Point. *The Savior's divinity glorified in His resurrection.* It is, as it were, the sun coming out of the cloud, and displaying the splendor of its rays. During the passion, the Divinity of Jesus Christ had been, as it were, eclipsed. It is true that a few circumstances in the midst of His many insults and ill-treatments, had indicated that He was more than a man; on the other hand, however, who was ever so unlike a God as He who was condemned, scourged as a slave, and who expired on a gibbet between two criminals? His supreme greatness begins to appear in this miraculous exit from the grave, for He rises by His own power, showing the absolute empire He exercises over life and death. He comes out of the sepulchre without disturbing the stone placed at its entrance, as He had come out of His holy mother's womb, without

violating the seal of her virginity. He comes from the grave as Joseph out of prison, to command a whole nation, and to communicate to His brothers a share of His happiness and glory; like Moses out of the waters of the Nile, to become the savior of his people; like Daniel out of the lion's den, to be raised above the envious men who had plotted his death. He comes out of the sepulchre victor over hell and sin, and after breaking asunder the chains of death, He changes His weakness into power, His mortality into immortality, His many humiliations into glory and honor.—(St. Leo. serm. 11, de ascens. Dom.

O priest of God, rise out of the grave of your imperfections. It should also be said of you on this day: "*He is risen, he is not here.*" He is no longer a slave to indifference and to that negligence which he carried to the very altar of God. He is no longer inattentive to the presence of God, thoughtless, lacking reserve in his manners, uneven in his temper. What a happy change has taken place in him.

Go to the altar and receive Him who is the resurrection and the life. When you will contemplate in the sanctuary of your heart, this glorious body more resplendant than the sun, adore, return thanks and pray, bring to this action the joy which love and confidence inspire. The phrase *Victimæ paschali* is a pious and ingenuous expression of the sentiments which the mystery of the resurrection inspires to the Church, and which she desires to inspire to her children. It would be useful to recite it according to the third manner of praying suggested by St. Ignatius.[1]

1st Point. *The soul of Jesus Christ glorified in its resurrection.* It comes out of limbo joyful and triumphant; it has just announced to the just of the Old Testament that the redemption has been accomplished. . . . The soul once more united to the body, a transformation takes place. To it it communicates a marvelous splendor. It rewards its past sufferings by ineffable delights. Accept, O my soul, all the humiliations which God will send thee, the day of thy glory will come.

2d Point. *The body of Jesus Christ glorified in its resurrection.* Its wounds are changed into sources of light. Its beauty surpasses infi-

1. See the introduction.

nitely the glory which will be imparted to the bodies of the elect. Let us be comforted in our sorrows. We have to weep during the night of this life; but in the morning, when the first rays of the blessed eternity will appear, sadness will give way to incomprehensible joy.

3d Point. *The divinity of Jesus Christ glorified in His resurrection.* It had been, as it were, eclipsed during the passion; it comes out of the cloud more radiant. It is Joseph passing from an obscure prison to the first dignity of Egypt. Moses saved from the waters to become the savior of his people. . . . Let us also come out of the grave of our imperfections, and walk in the saintly newness of a really sacerdotal life.

LIII. MEDITATION.

MAGDALEN AT THE GRAVE OF OUR LORD.

1st.—SHE SEEKS,

2d.—SHE FINDS,

3d.—SHE ANNOUNCES JESUS CHRIST.

1st Point. *Magdalen seeks Jesus Christ* with all the eagerness, the solicitude, the energy and constancy of true love.

I. Eagerness of her love. After a night which to her seemed to be very long, very early in the morning she wakes up her companions and starts on her journey. She is impatient to venerate the mortal remains of Him for whose loss she is inconsolable. She walks along rapidly; and yet what does she expect to find in the grave? The body of her Master, in a condition which will renew all her sorrows. O my soul, shouldst not thou go with greater eagerness to the holy table, at which the same Divine body will be given thee in the state of its glorified life?

II. *Solicitude, anxiety of love.* "*But Mary stood at the sepulchre without, weeping; now as she was weeping, she stooped and looked into the sepulchre.*"—(J. xx : 11.) The disciples have withdrawn, the other holy women have followed their example; Magdalen alone does not re-

tire. She had many times already looked into the sepulchre ; she again looks into it : "*Amanti semel aspexisse non sufficit, quia vis amoris intentionem multiplicat inquisitionis.*"—(St. Greg. hom. 25 in Evan.) Love is never satisfied, except when it has found what it sought. "*And she saw two angels in white, sitting. . . . They say to her, woman, why weepest thou? She says to them, because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.*"—(Ibid.) She sees two angels, but is neither frightened nor surprised at the sudden apparition. She does not even notice the dazzling whiteness of their garments. She hears them, she answers them, but never loses sight of the grand object of her search. She hears them, she speaks to them, only to learn from them where Jesus is, ready at once to quit the angels and to go to the gardener, in the hope to get from him some clue which will lead to the finding of Jesus. Quite unconcerned about all the rest, she had but one desire, which was to find Jesus. This desire controls her so far that she scarcely pays attention to her own words : "*If thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him.*" Of whom does she speak? She thinks that every one must know the facts concerning her Savior.

III. Strength and constancy of love. Nothing can shake her determination. How is it that she delays in a place so full for her of sad memories, especially since she has ascertained that the body of her Master is there no more? How does she dare to say that if she find Him she will take Him away? Did she pause to consider her ability, and the danger of such an undertaking? Love does not make such reflections : "*Plus affectat quam valet; de impossibilitate non causatur, quia cuncta, sibi posse et licere arbitratur.*"—(Im. l. iii, c. 5.) Is it thus, O my God, that I desire, that I seek, that I love Thee?

2d Point. *Magdalen finds Jesus.* He is often near us, and we fancy Him to be far off. It was Jesus Himself who had now spoken to His servant, and had asked her the cause of her tears. "*Jesus says to her, woman, why weepest thou?*" He knew full well the cause of her tears, and how agreeable it was to Him. Our affliction is pleasing to Him when our love of Him is its cause. If He leaves us for some time in desolation by concealing His presence, it is for the purpose of augmenting our merit, and adding more sweetness to our joy, when He will restore to us the assurance of His presence.

The love of Magdalen had induced her to forget her weakness, and to disregard all dangers; her hope had been unshaken, and she will brook no disappointment. Jesus rewards her by opening her eyes, and manifesting Himself to her, even before He appeared to any of the disciples. "*Jesus says to her, Mary! She turning says to Him, Rabboni!*" The whole scene is enacted in two words, one from Jesus, the other from Mary; but there were wonders in those two words. How many graces and lights accompany the word of Jesus. What transport of holy love was expressed by the word Mary. Mary! This suffices for Jesus to make Himself known. My Master! This suffices for Mary to enable Jesus to understand that she knows Him. What goodness and tenderness in the heart of Jesus when He pronounces the word Mary. What rapture and gratitude in the heart of Mary when she cries out Rabboni! A deep sadness had taken possession of, and, as it were, absorbed all the faculties of her soul; in a moment her Master's voice has scattered all the clouds, and filled her with heavenly consolation. O Jesus, grant that I may hear that intimate word of Thy heart, which overjoys the human heart and fills it with light and consolation. I will make myself less unworthy of this happiness, by closing my ear to all the tumults of earth, to hear Thee alone; by seeking Thee with Magdalen and seeking Thee alone.

3d Point. *Magdalen announces the resurrection of Jesus.* Her good Master had said to her: *Do not touch Me.* Wait till another time to give Me sensible signs of thy veneration. I am not yet about to leave earth to return to heaven, thou shalt have the opportunity to see Me again. Go thou to My brethren; it is time to put an end to their sorrow. Make haste and announce to them My resurrection. How touching this solicitude! But who are they whom Jesus hastens to console, and whom He calls His brethren? What have they done to deserve so much kindness?

Magdalen went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and related to them His very words. She exultingly spoke to them of His glorious state. . . . She and her companions did everything to convince them of the truth of the news, which should have caused them so much joy. All to no purpose.

"*These words seemed to them as idle tales.*"—(L. xxiv.) They had believed Magdalen when she had expressed a simple suspicion concern-

ing a fact which she had imagined herself; they refuse to believe her when she relates what she had seen with her own eyes, and heard with her ears. O the hardness of the heart of man for things concerning salvation. A story makes an impression upon us, and the truths of faith, grounded upon the authority of God Himself, can scarcely overcome the obstinacy of our mind. . . . Let us humble ourselves, and at the same time rejoice, since the Lord lends such a kindly ear to our miseries. Following the example of Mary Magdalen, let us not hesitate to leave Jesus to assist our brethren. In serving them, we serve Jesus Himself, and He will not forget our zeal.

1st Point. *Magdalen seeks Jesus.* I. Eagerness of her love. She starts early in the morning. . . . She walks rapidly; yet what does she hope to find? O my soul, thou shouldst be more eager to approach the holy table. . . . II. The solicitude of her love. The disciples have withdrawn. She cannot bring herself to abandon the spot. She had already looked many times into the sepulchre; she looks into it again. Unconcerned by the presence of the angels who speak, she listens to them, simply with a view to learn where the Savior is. Her language betrays her anxiety: "*Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him.*" She thinks that every one knows of whom she speaks. III. Power of her love. Nothing can shake her courage. Love attempts to do more than it can realize. . . . Is it thus, O my God, that I seek Thee? Do I love Thee as Magdalen did?

2d Point. *Magdalen finds Jesus.* Her hope has been firm; her expectation will not be disappointed. Mary!—Good Master! Everything is made clear by those two words. O Jesus, grant that I may hear that intimate word of Thy heart, which enraptures the soul with holy delight.

3d Point. *Magdalen announces the apparition of Jesus.* By His command she goes to the disciples. How exultingly she speaks to them of what she has seen and heard. She does all in her power to convince them of the truth of her relation. It is all in vain. They imagine that she relates a dream. . . . Let us not hesitate after the example of Magdalen, to leave Jesus, to assist our brethren. Let us not be surprised when contradictions come, whatever may be their cause or their occasion.

LIV. MEDITATION.

JESUS APPEARS TO THE TWO DISCIPLES GOING TO EMMAUS.

1st.—HE JOINS THEM.

2d.—HE CONVERSES WITH THEM.

3d.—HE SEPARATES FROM THEM.

1st Point. *Jesus joins the two disciples of Emmaus.* Everything breathes the most touching kindness, the most active sympathy and humble zeal in the conduct of Jesus Christ toward these two disciples, to whom He shows Himself, and whom He desires to go and prepare the apostles, assembled together in Jerusalem, to receive the same favor.

Full of sadness they go out of Jerusalem, the very day of the resurrection, and go out to the country in search of some diversion to their sorrow: "*Convertuntur ad sensualia, qui expectare debebant divina.*" —(Avanc.) They were imprudent sheep wandering from the flock; were they not exposing themselves to danger? Their faith had already grown weak; they had rejected the testimony of the holy women and of the apostles who, having visited the grave, had found it empty, and declared that the Savior had risen. Hence they now simply call Him a prophet. They had nearly lost hope. "We hoped." Fortunately they continued to love Him to some extent, and they conversed about Him. "*They talked together of all the things that had happened. . . . of Jesus of Nazareth.*" O how good it is to speak of God or the things of God, either within ourselves or with others. When we speak of God in our perplexities and troubles, He comes to us at once, giving us life and strength, and filling our hearts with His sacred love.

Notice with what kindness and humility Jesus hastens to help those who showed so little loyalty in the time of temptation. He is about to put an end to their affliction, though it was due to their own incredulity. These two men were not apostles, but were disciples. He approaches

them, walks and converses familiarly with them, as if He was one of them. He does not mind their small number ; He unveils His mysteries to these two, just as He would to a multitude, and as He had done at the well of Jacob, when the Samaritan woman alone could hear Him. Pastors of souls, behold your model, hasten to seek the sheep which go astray. Approach those sinners who will soon be lost, if your charity does not prevent their ruin. Go with them ; make them open their hearts to you ; you may, in this manner, dispel their prejudices and bring about their salvation. Be not one of those who care to address none but large audiences, and who, according to St. Bonaventure, *nolunt ampullosa verba sua spargere inter paucos.*

2d Point. *Conversation of Jesus with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.* Admire the wise deference with which He prepares them for the grace he is about to grant them. He begins by questioning them. "*What are those discourses that you hold one with another as you walk, and are sad?*" The questions which a God makes, cannot teach Him anything. Jesus knew both the subject of their conversation and the cause of their sadness ; but He desired to make them open their hearts, and to discover to Him the secret cause of their infidelity. The disciples did so ; and He immediately begins to instruct them, waking up at once their attention by reproaching them as He had already done in the course of His instructions. "*O foolish and slow of heart, to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken ! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter into His glory?*" He then expounded to them that which concerns Him in all the Scriptures, showing the perfect similarity of the prophecies with the events which had just transpired. Whilst enlightening their minds, He warmed their hearts and kindled them with heavenly fervor. They will soon say to one another : "*Was not our heart burning within us whilst He spoke in the way?*"—(Luc. xxiv.)

O disciples, you were well inspired when coming out of Jerusalem ; you spoke of Jesus and His sufferings. He of whom you spoke joined your company, spoke to you Himself, and at His voice the darkness of your soul gave way to light, your sadness to joy, your despondency to confidence and love. Do we deserve that our Savior should thus come and participate in our conversations? How many priests would have to blush were He, in certain circumstances, to appear to them on a

sudden and ask them, "*What are these discourses that you hold one with another?*" What of those railleries, those disputes, those levities, those indiscreet words? Are these conversations which become my representatives, men of God, priests who have celebrated the holy mysteries, and whose lips are yet empurpled with His blood? "*Ex ore sacerdotis nihil nisi sanctum, nihil nisi honestum et utile procedere debet verbum, qui tam sæpe Christi accipit sacramentum.*"—(Imit. l. iv, c. 11.)

3d Point. *Jesus leaves the two disciples.* Time passed away rapidly whilst He was speaking. "*They drew nigh to the town whither they were going; and He pretended to wish to go farther.*" Such is at times the conduct of God toward His servants; He seems to move far away from us, in order to attract us to Him with greater ardor; He conceals His favors so as to animate our desires. As a tender father, He seems to withdraw Himself from children whom He cherishes, to increase their love, and preserve it from growing cold. "*But they constrained Him saying: Stay with us because it is toward evening.*" Great is the power of importunate prayer. It constrains God to stay with us, and to grant us our requests. "*And He went in with them.*" "*And it came to pass as He was at table with them, He took bread and blessed and brake and gave to them; and their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.*" This was a delightful moment, but it was a moment only. "*And He vanished out of their sight.*" What were then their feelings? Delightful is the peace which dwells in a soul to which Jesus has spoken, and which He enabled to taste the truth of His mysteries.

We double our joys by sharing them with those whom we love. "*Rising up the same hour they went back to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven gathered together . . . and they told them what things were done in the way, and how they knew Him in the breaking of bread.*" When Jesus lavishes His graces upon us, it is generally to excite us to win hearts to Him.

"They truly know their Lord in the breaking of bread, whose heart burneth so mightily within them, from Jesus walking with them. Such affection and devotion as this, so vehement a love and burning, is often far from me."—(Im. l. iv, c 14.) Endeavor to discover its cause. Is it not because your faith is languishing, or because various distractions which are not quite involuntary cause you to forget God? Mind

Him, and Him alone, and you will soon, like the two disciples, experience your heart burning within you. There is no ill that will not soon melt if exposed to the burning and continual rays of this sun.

Go to the altar to break the heavenly bread, and during the sacrifice, beseech Jesus Christ to open your eyes. In your thanksgiving, you might address to Him this admirable prayer of St. Anselm: *Amabilissime Jesu, da mihi ut diligam te semper, quantum possum et debeo, ut tu solus sis meditatio mea. Sine cessatione te sentiat cor meum, te alloquatur spiritus meus, tecum et de te fabuletur mens mea. Fac me rerum transeuntium oblivisci, præ magnitudine amoris tui. Bone Jesu, reple cor meum inextinguibili delectione tui, ac continua recordatione tui. Dulcis Christe, Deus meus, accende me totum igne tuo, ut totus dulcedine amoris tui plenus, totus flamma caritatis succensus, diligam te Dominum meum ex toto corde meo, totisque medullis præcordiorum meorum, habens te in corde, in ore, ac præ oculis meis semper et ubique.*

1st Point. *Jesus joins the disciples who go to Emmaus.* They leave Jerusalem to seek some relief to their sorrow. They were incautious sheep wandering from the flock. Their faith was very much weakened. They now give the Savior no appellation but that of prophet, and their hope was nearly gone. "*We hoped.*" Our Lord hastens to meet them. He approaches them; He walks and converses familiarly with them. To two disciples He will unveil the mysteries as He had done on a former occasion to the one woman of Samaria. Let us imitate the zeal and humility of our model.

2d Point. *Jesus converses with the two disciples.* He begins by questioning them, that they might discover to Him the wound of their infidelity. He instructs them, showing the concordance of the prophecies with the events that have been accomplished. Whilst enlightening their minds He imparts a sacred warmth to their hearts. . . . How well had they been inspired, in taking the Savior and His sufferings for the subject of their conversation. How many priests would have to blush for shame, if the Savior appearing to them in certain circumstances, were to ask them, "*What are these discourses which you hold?*" Let us never forget what kind of language should be that of the priest.

3d Point. *Jesus vanishes from their sight.* They had arrived at the town whither they were going, and He made as though He would go farther; but they urged Him to stay. Oh the power of prayer. It constrains God to stay with us, and, as it were, to subscribe to our requests. He went in with them . . . and at the breaking of the bread, their eyes are opened; they recognize Him. But He has already vanished away. Consoling visits like this are so short! How sweet the peace they leave in the soul. The two disciples think of nothing else but of making known their happiness to others.

LV. MEDITATION.

APPARITION OF JESUS TO THE APOSTLES—CONTEMPLATION.

1st.—CONTEMPLATE THE PERSONS CONCERNED.

2d.—HEAR THEIR WORDS.

3d.—CONSIDER THEIR ACTIONS.

FIRST PRELUDE.—"*Now when it was late that same day (of the resurrection) the first of the week, and the doors were shut where the disciples were gathered together, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, and said to them, Peace be to you . . . and He showed them His hands and His side. . . . The disciples, therefore, were glad when they saw the Lord.*"—(St. John. xx.)

SECOND PRELUDE.—Represent to yourself the place in which the apostles were assembled together.[1]

THIRD PRELUDE.—Pray to our Lord to manifest Himself to us in the sanctuary of our hearts, and to inspire us with the same sentiments which the same apparition excited in the hearts of the apostles.

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons mentioned.* There was in this apartment the whole of the apostolical college, Thomas alone being absent, and how many tears did he not shed, after, on account

1. They commonly believe that it was the cenacle, wherein the apostles had continued to take their meals together since the evening of the last supper. Many think that the apostles alone were present there when Jesus appeared. St. Bonaventure says that the most Blessed Virgin, the two disciples of Emmaus, and Mary Magdalen were there.

of his absence from this reunion! Study the expression of the countenances of all those present. They are divided in opinion. Some believe in the resurrection, the others do not; but even those who admit its reality remain under the influence of fear. "For fear of the Jews." All appear to be troubled and anxious. O my God, if I had a lively faith and a firm hope, I should not be fearful in presence of Thy enemies. What can they do to me if Thou art my protector? These men, so timid to-day, will soon be proof against all fear; they shall astonish the world by their intrepidity. Strengthen me, O Lord, through the grace of Thy spirit. Consider the two disciples of Emmaus, entering suddenly. They hasten to relate what happened on the road, and in what manner they knew the Lord. They speak with the conviction of persons who both saw and heard; but alas, whilst their statement confirms the faith of some, it does not overcome the obstinacy of the others, who persevere in their incredulity.—Contemplate Jesus Christ, at the moment of His apparition. . . His countenance expresses infinite goodness and meekness. Rays of light shoot out from His sacred wounds. He appears at the same time so affable and so full of majesty! In your many and so familiar relations with Him, never separate respect from confidence, nor confidence from respect. In your intercourse with your brethren, if they are your inferiors, strive to inspire confidence rather than respect. Jesus will soon give you this lesson, by His actions and words, as He did by the whole of His exterior appearance.

2d and 3d Points. *Consider the actions, and hear the words.*—Whilst the disciples of Emmaus were striving to communicate their joy to the others, and that the others discussed their statement, which gave so much strength to that of the other witnesses, suddenly Jesus appears in the midst of the assembly and says: "Peace be to you! I had promised it, I give it, it is I, fear not." At the sight of Him, at the sound of that voice so well known to them, the apostles are dumbfounded; and in their trouble, being unable to believe in the reality of such a happy event, they thought they saw a spirit.

Jesus has to reassure them anew; and He does so with ineffable goodness. "*Why are you troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?*" Do you no longer know your Master? He speaketh to you now. "*See my hands and feet.*" These wounds I keep as an eternal monument of my love for you. "*Handle and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see Me to have.*" Whilst so speaking He showed

them His hands, His feet and His side. What impression did this ravishing spectacle produce upon them? Did they dare touch this adorable body? But the Lord invited, and as it were commanded them to do so. Sacred wounds, which I have the happiness to adore and to touch every day, heal all the infirmities of my soul; of these the most dangerous must be my want of lively and strong faith.

However, some believed not yet, and wondered for joy. In order to omit no means of convincing them, the Lord asked them: "*Have you here anything to eat?*" And He really eat in their presence. At the same time, "*He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures.*" Having thus given them confidence, and fully convinced them of His resurrection, He reproached them, not to cause them sadness, but to leave His ministers an example of the moderation and charity, which they should use when obliged to correct others. "*He upbraided them for their incredulity . . . because they did not believe them who had seen Him after He was risen again.*" He had, however, a more serious charge against them of which He does not speak; they had not believed His own words, when He had so clearly announced to them His resurrection for the third day. Our Savior in His glorious life continues to be ever meek, ever humble. One would almost say that He does not resent an insult when it is offered to Him personally. The apostles acknowledged that they had offended their good Master, and remembered that they had often offended Him before: His indulgence toward them, whilst covering them with confusion, touched them to the very heart and became one of the strongest bonds which united them to Him.

Let us learn of Jesus how to fulfill rightly the difficult duty of fraternal correction. The better way to obtain the reparation of a fault is often to make it appear that we have forgotten it, especially if the offense was personal to us. Let us learn of the apostles to rise up after our falls, and to use them as means to grow humble and fervent in the service of God.

Colloquy with our Lord, uniting our adorations to their adorations, and our joy to their joy.—Beseech Jesus Christ risen from the dead to work in us through holy communion the blessed effects which His apparition worked in them.

Domine Jesu, rogo te humiliter, ut, sicut post gloriosam resurrectionem tuam discipulis dixisti: Ego sum, nolite timere, sic etiam animam meam clementer respicias, eamque consolari digneris iisdem verbis tuis. Præsertim in hora mortis meæ dic animæ meæ: Salus tua ego sum noli timere de iniquitatibus tuis, quia, ego sum advocatus reorum; noli timere a corruptione, quia ego sum resurrectio; noli timere a morte, quia ego sum vita; noli timere ab inferno, quia ego sum merces tua magna nimis.—(Ludovic. Blosius.)

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons.* The whole apostolic college except St. Thomas; they all appear to be troubled and anxious. If faith were lively, great would be the cause of joy.—The two disciples of Emmaus entering suddenly, relating with animation what had happened to them.—Jesus Christ appearing in the midst of them; He appears at the same time full of kindness and majesty.

2d and 3d Points. *Consider the actions, hear the words.*—Jesus appears. "Peace be to you, Fear not." The apostles imagine that they see a spirit. The Savior must tranquilize them anew, eat in their presence, and remark to them that spirits have neither flesh nor bones. He invites them to touch His wounds; at the same time He opens their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures; upbraids them for their incredulity. But in His glorious life He continues to be kind as ever before. Let us learn of Him how to fulfill the difficult duty of fraternal correction; and of the apostles, how to profit by our faults as a means to become more humble.

LVI. MEDITATION.

RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD—*Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum.*

1st.—THE GOOD PRIEST EXPECTS WITH CONFIDENCE THE GLORIOUS RESURRECTION.

2d.—HE STRIVES TO FULFILL THE CONDITIONS FOR ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT.

1st Point. *The good priest expects the glorious resurrection with confidence.* He sees a sure pledge of this resurrection in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which contains at the same time, the principle, the motive and the model of our own resurrection ; its principle, since He who raised Himself, can raise us up also from the grave ; the motive which induces Him to raise us up in reality, and the model for its realization.

I. Principle of our resurrection in that of Jesus Christ. It is by His own power that He raised Himself to life, as it was of His own free will He had given up His life. He needed no other help. His resurrection from the grave is in Him the act of sovereign power. He can repeat for others the miracle He performed in His own case. The miracle of a God-man dying and then raising Himself to life, is a greater miracle than that of a God-man living, restoring life to other men. He can and will raise us up at the last day.

II. The resurrection of Jesus Christ the reason for our resurrection. We are united to Him by so many sacred ties, that our resurrection is a necessary consequence of His. The fact of His resurrection does not suffice to satisfy either Himself or ourselves ; our resurrection must be the complement of His. His designs would not be accomplished if He would not make us sharers in His triumphs : for as His glory is the principle of our happiness, so our happiness should constitute a part of His glory. He is our head, and we are His members. Is it not reasonable that the members should share in the condition of their head ? "*Quo enim præcessit gloria capitis eo vocatur et spes cor-*

poris."—(St. Leo. serm. 1, de Ascens.) He wishes, as our chief, that His members should act, suffer, live and die as He did. Why would He not wish them to rise as He did? Is it not just, that since He gives us a share in His labors, He should also give us a participation in His rewards? He is our Savior, and His redemption is abundant; but it shall not be such unless through Him we recover all that we have lost in Adam, the life of the body, as well as that of the soul. If we were not to rise, it might be said that He has not saved the whole man. He is our life; the spirit which raised Him is within us. Such is the marvellous effect of communion, that it is not we who live, but He who liveth in us. "*I live, not I, but Christ liveth in me.*"—(Gal. ii: 20.) How then, says a holy doctor, are there men so unreasonable as to refuse the hope of immortal life to bodies which have so often eaten the flesh of a God in whom resides the very source of immortality. "*He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, has everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*"—(J. vii: 59.) Could the promise be more formal?

Thou wilt not permit, O Lord, that the sanctuaries of our hearts, so often consecrated by Thy presence, may be reduced forever to the corruption of the grave. Death could detain Thee but a few hours under its empire, and Thou hast made us participants of Thy immortality by means of Thy sacrament, and we also hope in the word of Thy prophet: "*Thou wilt not give Thy holy one to see corruption.*" From all of this St. Paul drew the inference: "*If there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen again.*"—(I. Cor. xv: 13.)

III. Resurrection of Jesus Christ, pattern of our own resurrection. Can we imagine anything more beautiful than this triumph of the Savior, this glorified humanity, this material body, living the life of a spiritualized body adorned with the prerogatives of an ethereal being; and let us say to ourselves, such will be one day, if I choose, my own state for all eternity. When Jesus will come and raise our bodies from the dust of the grave, He will make them like unto His own glorified body. "*Who will reform the body of our lowness, made alike to the body of His glory.*"—(Phil. iii: 21.) Our bodies are now liable to corruption, to sufferings, to death; but then they will enjoy the same incorruptibility, the same impassibility, the same subtility, the same splendor as the body of Jesus Christ. "*It is sown in*

corruption, it shall rise in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it shall rise in glory; it is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power; it is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body."—(I. Cor. xv : 42.)

It is true, however, that this blessed transformation will be the lot of the friends of God alone. For behold a great, a dreadful mystery. "We shall all indeed rise, but we shall not all be changed." The future resurrection, a sweet hope for the good, is a great subject of terror for the wicked. The former will rise to live eternally. "*They that have done good, shall come forth unto the resurrection of life.*" But the latter will come out of one grave only to be cast into another; to the grave of earth shall succeed the grave of fire, which shall never be extinguished. "*But they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment.*"—(J. v : 29.) O Lord, how blind he is, who, by a tepid, unfruitful life, a life perhaps full of sins, imagines that he can rise to a glorious resurrection which thou hast promised to none but to Thy faithful servants. "*Wherefore, brethren, labor the more, that by good works you may make sure of your calling and election.*"—(Pet. ii : 1, 10.)

2d Point. *The good priest strives to fulfill the conditions to which is annexed the promise of a glorious resurrection. Let us hear St. Paul:* "*If we be dead with Him, we shall live also with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.*"—(II. Tim. ii : 11, 12.) "*We are the sons of God, and if sons, heirs also, heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ; yet, so if we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified with Him.*"—(Rom. viii : 17.) "*If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.*"—(Rom. vi : 5.) All our claims to the resurrection of the elect, are grounded upon our union with Jesus Christ, whom St. Paul calls *first-born from the dead.* He is our King; if we fight with Him, we will reign with Him. He is our brother; we will have a share in His inheritance; but only inasmuch as we will have shared in His sufferings. The Chief whose members we are, was humbled, "becoming obedient unto the death of the cross;" we will not be crowned with Him in glory unless we make, as He did, the sacrifice of our honor, of our liberty, of our life. If we resemble Jesus immolated, we shall be made like unto Jesus glorified. Let us enter the grave as He entered it. He carried naught into it but wounds and sores; let us, at least, carry into it a penitent body, worn

out by works of the ministry. Moreover, the holy Eucharist is given us as a pledge of our future glory. *Futuræ gloriæ nobis pignus datur.* Let us, therefore, honor this mystery. With hearts full of love, let us receive this living and life-giving bread; we will be raised up by the Spirit of God, and because of that Spirit which lives in us. "*If the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, He that raised up Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your natural bodies, because of His spirit that dwelleth in you.*"—(Rom. viii: 11.) Let us, therefore, as Jesus did, live by the life of this Divine Spirit, being ever docile to His inspirations.

Such are the grounds upon which rests our glorious resurrection; are they not immovably solid? Examine yourself, take strong resolutions. As a preparation for your Mass, address to our Lord the following prayer of St. Anselm: *Fac me, Domine Jesu, ita hæc mysteria ore et corde percipere, atque fide et affectu sentire, ut per eorum virtutem sic merear complantari similitudini mortis et resurrectionis tuæ per veteris hominis mortificationem et novitatem sanctæ vitæ . . . ut maneam in te et tu in me; quatenus in resurrectione reformes corpus humilitatis meæ, configuratum corpori claritatis tuæ, et in te in æternum gaudeam de gloria tua. Qui cum Patre et Spiritu Sancto vivis et regnas in sæcula sæculorum.*"—(Or. 34.)

1st Point. *The good priest expects with confidence a glorious resurrection.* The resurrection of Jesus Christ proves that He is able and willing to raise us up from the dead. He has the power to accomplish this deed. The miracle of a God-man dying and then raising Himself to life, is more astonishing than that of a God-man living, raising other men to life. It is His will. We are united to Him by so many ties, that our resurrection is a necessary consequence of His. We are His members; members follow the condition of the head. He is our Savior; the work of His redemption would not be complete if we were not to recover in Him all that we lost in Adam, the life of the body as well as that of the soul. He nourishes us with His glorified flesh; our bodies become His real sanctuaries. Could He permit them to be reduced forever to the corruption of the grave? Has He not said: "*He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, has life everlasting, and I*

will raise him up at the last day." Our resurrection shall be accomplished on the model of His own. There are, indeed, two different resurrections: the one frightful, the other infinitely blessed. Let us thank God for having placed us in a state in which we can easily escape the former and procure the latter.

2d Point. *The good priest aims at fulfilling the conditions to which is annexed the hope of a glorious resurrection.* "*If we be dead with Jesus Christ, we shall live also with Him.*" He is our King; let us combat with Him, and with Him we will triumph. He is our brother; we will be co-heirs with Him if we share in His poverty and sufferings. Let us enter the grave in the same conditions as Christ, and we will rise from it glorious as He did. He carried within the grave naught but wounds and sores. Let us, at least, carry to our grave a penitent body.

LVII. MEDITATION.

DOGMA OF THE RESURRECTION—TWO MOTIVES FOR TEACHING IT ZEALOUSLY.

1st.—SPECIAL REVELATION REGARDING THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

2d.—HAPPY RESULTS OF BELIEF IN THE RESURRECTION.

1st Point. *The special revelations made by God concerning this dogma, should inspire great zeal in its teaching.* Faith in the resurrection was communicated to our first parents immediately after their fall, it was transmitted from age to age through the Patriarchs and the prophets, sealed by the blood of martyrs even before the coming of the Messiah, taught and professed with greater clearness under the new covenant, figured in all nature; and it is evident that God's will is that we should always live under the impression of this doctrine.

Adam had hardly been condemned, when God comforted him by the promise of redemption, which contained that of the resurrection. "*As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.*"—(I. Cor.

xv : 22.) This was so well understood by Adam, that he gave his companion the name of Eve, mother of the living, foreseeing in a certain degree the coming of that admirable mother, whose Son would be the resurrection and the life. He carefully transmitted this faith to his descendants.

We find this belief among Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; this latter one, professes it openly a moment before his death. "*I will look for Thy salvation, O Lord.*"—(Gen. xlix : 18.) Full of this hope he will go into the grave satisfied.

We find it among the prophets. Is it not a comfort to hear Isaias saying to the faithful people : "*Thy dead man shall live. . . awake and give praise, ye that dwell in the dust.*" Daniel speaks of the different conditions of the good and of the wicked as a consequence of the resurrection. "*Some shall awake unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach to see it always.*"—(Dan. xii : 2.) What is there more striking and full of majesty than the vision of Ezechiel? After describing it, the prophet adds : "*Thus says the Lord, behold I will open your graves, and will bring you out of your sepulchres . . . and you shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall have opened your sepulchres.*"—(xxxvii: 12, 13.) This faith comforted Job in his sorrows. "*I know that my Redeemer liveth, and on the last day I shall rise out of the earth, and I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God.*" —(Job. xix : 25, 26.)

This faith inspired the Machabees with their heroic constancy. One of them in presenting his limbs to be tortured said : "*These I have from heaven, but for the laws of God, I now despise them, because I hope to receive them again from Him;*" and another : "*It is better to be put to death by men, to look for hope from God, to be raised up again by Him.*"—(II. Mach. vii : 11, 14.)

It is, however, in the Gospel that this truth is most clearly taught. Not only did our Lord teach it, but He makes it evident through the resurrections which he wrought. In the first instance, He recalls to life the daughter of Jarius a moment after her death. He next raises up from the dead the son of the widow of Naim, whom they were carrying to the grave, and later He restores life to Lazarus, who had been dead four days. At last He raises Himself to life. God does more yet. To continually remind us of this consoling dogma, He wished that nature

should everywhere bear its image. The change of the seasons, the succession of day and of night, the many transformations which we witness in the natural order, everything typifies the glorious resurrection. In winter everything is dead ; everything springs to life again in the spring-time. The seed is put in the earth as the corpse in the grave ; it begins like it to become decomposed, only to shoot forth again ; and the husbandman will gather up thirty or forty grains for the one grain which he had lost. Of what does death deprive the just man, if we compare it with that which the resurrection will restore to him ?

God wishes this truth deeply engraved in the hearts of men, as a remedy against passions, and an encouragement to virtue. In order, however, that it may produce those results, we must bestow upon it deep reflection. Hence comes the obligation for the priests to make it often the subject of their exhortations.

2d Point. *Results conducive to salvation produced by belief in the resurrection of the dead.* Here are the principal results : To despise the death of the body, to esteem that mystical death, which prepares us for immortality ; to love and respect our bodies in a holy manner, since their destiny is so glorious.

Death is nothing for him who expects a glorious resurrection : it is not so much the loss of life, as a sleep ; and hence the Scriptures call it : "*Brethren, I will not have you to be ignorant concerning those who are asleep, that you may not be sorrowful as those who have no hope.*"—(I. Thess. iv : 12.) The unwise alone are they who believe that the just die. When they leave this life they enter into rest. "*In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die . . . but they are in peace.*"—(Wisd. iii : 2, 3.) There is no affliction which is not softened by this hope, when it is well established in the heart.

In proportion as a strong faith in the resurrection induces us to despise the death of the body, so much does it urge us to esteem this mortification or mystical death, which withdraws us from the slavery of senses to place us in the absolute control of grace. This is an obligation common to all those who belong to Jesus Christ. "*They who are Christ's have crucified their flesh.*"—(Gal. v : 24.) Every Christian is a living victim. He should sacrifice himself every day, and nail his passions to the cross ; for the priest the obligation is yet more strict, since he ought to be a more perfect image of Jesus Christ crucified. Painful as this

obligation is to nature, it is made sweet by the hope of a blessed resurrection. "*Therefore, my heart has been glad, and my tongue has rejoiced; moreover, my flesh also shall rest in peace.*"—(P. xv: 9.) On this account: because the Lord has pledged Himself to draw my body out of the grave, and to associate it to the glory of His own body. If I be faithful, therefore, I cheerfully submit to the yoke of His law, I renounce myself, I take up my cross . . . and I, moreover, bless His goodness for preparing so much glory and happiness for my body, as a reward for sufferings so light. From this very moment, this hope is rest for my flesh. "*My flesh shall rest in peace.*" The countenance of a certain martyr shone resplendent with joy, whilst the torturer was actually cutting off his limbs; being asked for the reason of this joy, he answered, I am the vine of the Lord. This is cut and dressed during the winter; but the spring resurrection will come and the flesh shall blossom anew.

Finally, we should love and treat our bodies with great respect, since they are the instruments of our virtues, and shall have so large a share in the eternal felicity of the soul. We have a just cause of affliction, when we see some of our brethren acting so cruelly against themselves as to commit the most lamentable excesses. Does he love his body who denies it the glory and the delights of heaven, to devote it to the insults and torments of eternal reprobation? *Heu! quanta insania, exclaims St. Jerome, exiguis et brevi tempore duraturis deliciis, æternas amittere delicias et cruciatus subire sempiternos!* Take pity on those unfortunate people. Teach without ceasing the nature of true love of self, as we find it so admirably conveyed in this mystery. Often repeat the admonition of St. Paul: "*Be not deceived, God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap; for he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption; but he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting.*"—)Gal. vi: 7 8.) Apply to yourself the counsel he gives to Timothy: "*Be mindful that the Lord Jesus Christ is risen again from the dead.*"—(Tim. ii: 8.) This remembrance sustains the courage of the apostles and the pastors, as it also furnishes the strength of the martyr.

1st Point. *The special revelation made by God concerning the resurrection, should induce us to teach it with great care.* The doctrine of

the resurrection was given to our first parents, transmitted from age to age, sealed by the blood of martyrs, even under the old law, was taught and professed more openly under the new dispensation, is figured in all nature.—Adam was comforted by this promise. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob,—prophets Isaias, Ezechiel, Job,—the Machabees.—Resurrections effected by Jesus Christ.—Nature everywhere affords us its figure. Hence our obligation to insist on this point in our preaching.

2d Point. *Results conducive to salvation which this doctrine should produce.* Contempt of corporal death, esteem of spiritual death, respect and affection for our body.—For him who expects the resurrection, death is only a sleep.—This belief induces us to love mortification. "*Therefore, my heart has been glad.*" How much worthy of respect our bodies are, and how little, alas, are they respected!

LVIII. MEDITATION.

LOW SUNDAY—A GOOD PRIEST A MINISTER OF PEACE.

1st.—HE ASKS FOR IT FOR THE CHURCH.

2d.—HE SECURES IT FOR HIS BRETHREN.

3d.—HE PRESERVES AND PERFECTS IT IN HIMSELF.

1st Point. *A good priest prays for peace in the name and in behalf of the Church.* The Church having chosen us to be the interpreters of her desires with God, does not leave us in ignorance of what those desires are. *Peace*, such is the principal object of the public prayer which she commands us to offer. Her children provoke the anger of God by offending Him. She wants her ministers to strive to appease Him by offering to Him unceasingly the sacrifice of propitiation and praise. She wishes especially that at the altar they should employ the immense credit granted to them by the blood of Jesus Christ, to bring down from heaven to earth all the benedictions of peace.

This is the first fruit she expects from the holy sacrifice : *In primis quæ tibi offerimus pro Eccelesia tua. . . . quam pacificare. . . . digneris toto orbe terrarum.* A moment before Consecration, she bids us extend our hands over the offering to symbolize our possession in her name of Jesus Christ, and of all His merits. Notice the prayer which she puts on our lips at the solemn moment at which the Almighty will obey our voice : *Ut placatus accipias;* be appeased, O Lord, at the sight of Thy Son mystically immolated: *Diesque nostras in tua pace disponas :* Dispose, place the days of our life under the empire of Thy peace ; by this Thou shalt preserve us from eternal damnation, and place us among the number of Thy elect : *Atque ab æterna damnatione nos eripi, et in electorum tuorum jubeas grege numerari.* When, however, the holy victim is already on the altar ; we present to God this victim which is so pleasing to Him, and through His merits we ask for "peace." *Da propitius pacem in diebus nostris.* Again when we raise up our voice, it is to recite the Lord's prayer, which is an evidence of reconciliation between the Father and His children, and also to pray for the perpetuity of this blessed peace. *Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum.* Finally, we are about to consummate the holy mysteries. Having our eyes tenderly fixed on the adorable Lamb, and striking our breast, we do twice beseech Him to have pity on us : *Miserere nobis;* and on the third to grant us that which is most precious in the treasures of His mercies, to give us peace. *Dona nobis pacem.* We end in a last effort by reminding Jesus Christ of what He said to His apostles on the eve of His death "that He left them peace, that He gave them His peace," and solicit Him to grant the same favor to the whole Church. We do not only ask the peace which He leaves and which the apostles already enjoyed, since they were pure—(J. xiii : 10) but we also ask the peace which He gives, His peace ; *pacem meam*, a peace unalterable which He enjoys Himself, and destines for His elect, a peace which consequently is according to His will : *Secundum voluntatem, tuam*, since He wishes to reunite all in the bosom of His Father. Let us interrogate our conscience: Do we console the Church through the fervor with which we address those prayers to God? From these prayers she expects the surcease of her sorrows and the salvation of her children.

2d Point. *A good priest secures the blessing of peace to his fellow-beings.* This is the end of all the duties which he fulfills. Peace,

according to St. Augustine, should be defined the tranquility which results from order: *Pax est tranquillitas ordinis.* There we find order and rest, where everything is in its place. "O man," the same doctor exclaims, "thy place is the bosom of Thy God. *Locus tuus. Deus tuus.*" In Him alone art thou happy, remaining united to Him by obedience and love. Let Him govern thy mind and thy heart: believe when He speaks, obey when He commands, thou shalt be in peace, and shalt taste the sweets of peace.

Jesus Christ came into the world for the sole end of procuring to man this twofold peace, of the mind and of the heart. For this end also did He establish the priesthood. The priest continues His work of peace-giving. In the administration of the sacraments, but especially in the holy tribunal, he gives the peace of the heart, by giving grace which is ever accompanied with peace when properly received.

[1]In every occurrence he labors against sin and passions; against sin which destroys peace by remorse; against passions which beget sin, and which, of themselves, bring agitation and trouble, and deposit in the hearts numberless seeds of dissensions and wars. "*From whence are wars and contentions amongst you?*" *Are they not hence, from your concupiscences, which war in your members?*"—(Jac. iv: 1.) Does not the priest in the sick man's room, appear like an angel of peace, restoring calm and serenity to anxious souls, blotting away the last traces of their faults, and opening before them the kingdom of eternal peace? How sweet and powerful in a parish in the midst of families, is the influence of a zealous priest to prevent dissensions and preserve union! O preacher of peace, how beautiful your ministry! How pleasing to God, how useful to your fellow-beings are all your labors in that direction! "*How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace.*"—(Rom. x: 15.)

If your conscience reproaches you with not having fulfilled all the designs of God in this respect, have recourse to His clemency; and hold it as certain that He will forgive you your faults, however great they may have been, provided you repent. He has none at this moment but thoughts of peace concerning your person. "*I know the thoughts that*

1. Grace to you and peace, is the ordinary greeting of St. Paul at the beginning of his epistles.

I think toward you . . . . thoughts of peace and not of affliction."—(Jer. xxix : 11.)

3d Point. *A good priest preserves and perfects the existence of peace.* In himself, in the two-fold interest of his sanctification, and of that of his brethren. Peace is the surest and the shortest way to arrive at perfection ; it prepares the soul for all the virtues, and places it in a state wherein God loves to enrich it with all His gifts. "*The Lord will bless the people with peace.*"—(Ps. xxviii : 11.) St. John Climacus says that the tranquil soul is adorned with virtues, like the firmament with stars ; and that her state may be called the interior heaven of man.

We have much need of peace of mind to direct ourselves and others wisely in the difficult circumstances which occur. When we are free from agitation God enlightens us. His light is reflected in us, as the rays of the sun are reflected in the calm, undisturbed waters, which made St. Ambrose remark : *Summus sapientiæ finis est ut simus mente tranquilla.* When we are in peace, God dwells in us. "*And His place is in peace.*"—(Ps. lxv : 3.) And we are then strong against any attack. "*God in the midst thereof, it shall not be troubled.*"—(Ps. xlv : 6.)

This is also the means which our Lord Jesus Christ uses to strengthen His apostles, after His resurrection. They have seen Him in His state of glory, and they are filled with joy ; trials, however, will soon come. The first one to be met with, will be the privation of His visible presence. What will He do to mitigate its bitterness, and to prepare them for the adversities which He had predicted to them? Let us hear Him : "I must return to My Father ;" yet a little while, and you shall not see Me. But, before leaving you, I will leave you a last pledge of My love. I will not give you riches, these I have taught you to trample under your feet ; neither will I confer honors upon you. I met with many rebuffs, and, out of pure choice, I preferred to be despised than to be esteemed by men. I give you a blessing which has the power to drive away sorrow, and to change sadness into joy. "*Peace I leave you, My peace I give you.*" It was indeed owing to the chaste delights of interior peace, that the apostles, the martyrs, all the saints, triumphed over the world with all its allurements and torments. "Do then seek after peace and pursue it."—(Ps.

xxxiii : 15.) Go to the altar and unite yourself to the prince of peace. "*And may the God of peace Himself sanctify you in all things; that your whole spirit, and soul and body, may be preserved blameless in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"—(II. Thess. v : 23.)

1st Point. *A good priest asks for peace for the Church.* Peace is the first object of public prayer, the first fruit of the Divine sacrifice. "*In primis quæ tibi offerimus, pro Ecclesia tua . . . quam pacificare . . . digneris . . .—Ut placatus accipias, diesque nostros in tua pace disponas.—Da propitius pacem.*

2d Point. *A good priest secures the blessing of peace for his brethren.* This is the end of all the duties which he fulfills, particularly that of the holy tribunal. In the room of the sick man, he is the angel of peace; in families, he maintains peace or restores it; in the pulpit he is the apostle of peace.

3d Point. *A good priest preserves and perfects the existence of peace in himself.* In the twofold interest of his sanctification and of that of the neighbor. To him peace of mind is necessary for prayer and for the proper guidance of others. Through the power secured by the sweet delights of peace, the apostles, the martyrs and all the saints triumphed over hell and the world.

LIX. MEDITATION.

CONDITIONS OF SPIRITUAL PEACE.

1st.—NO PEACE WITH GOD SAVE THROUGH INNOCENCE.

2d.—NO PEACE WITH OUR FELLOW-BEINGS SAVE THROUGH CHARITY.

3d.—NO PEACE WITH OURSELVES UNLESS WE COMBAT AGAINST OURSELVES.

1st Point. *Peace with God through innocence.* St. Augustine asks: *Quid est pacem habere ad Deum, nisi velle quod jubet et nolle quod prohibet?* How can we have peace with God, if we take pleasure in that

which displeases Him, if we seek our satisfaction in that which offends Him?

Let us examine the principle. God is my ultimate end, my sovereign good, my center; when united to this adorable center, I am in peace; when separated from it, I must necessarily be in trouble and pain. But I am united to God, only by the submission of my will to His will. If I resist this will, I quit the sphere of my peace, and place myself in an abnormal condition. If I obey not a law which my whole nature and my religion demand of me to respect, my reason will necessarily turn against me; my faith will condemn and terrify me; my conscience will torture me with remorse. Could I, O my God, entirely erase from my mind the remembrance of Thy threats and of Thy judgments? Can I think on this without terror? *Mala conscientia semper timida est et inquieta. Suaviter requiesces, si cor tuum te non reprehenderit.*—(Imit. l. ii, c. 6.)

Peace is the product of justice.—(Is. xxxii : 17.) "*Whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad.*"—(Prov. xxxii : 21.)—"*Peace to everyone that worketh good.*"—(Rom. ii : 14.) It is the first reward of order observed, as disquietude is the first punishment of every disorder. It follows, that whereas even light faults, in a profession as holy as ours, contain a more culpable infraction of justice and order, it is not all at surprising that a merely negligent and tepid priest, should live in a state of trouble and anxiety. *Vis habere pacem? fac justitiam. Duæ amicæ sunt; tu forte unam vis, alteram non facis. Nemo est qui nolit pacem; sed non omnes volunt operari justitiam.*—(St. Aug.) When a soul possesses the purity which results from justice, nothing prevents it from uniting itself to God, the center of its peace. "*Submit thyself then to Him, and have peace.*"—(Job. xxii: 21.)

2d Point. *Peace with our neighbor through charity.* Our peace with God is the fruit of our love of God and of His law. "*Much peace to those who love Thy law.*" Our peace with our neighbor is the fruit of that sincere charity which makes us love him, notwithstanding his defects, and the many ways in which he may have wronged us. Let each one treat others as he wishes to be treated by them; let him spare, bear and excuse, as he wishes to be spared, excused and borne with; let him love as he wishes to be loved; discord and divisions will become impossible. "*If the God of charity be with you, the God of peace shall also be*

with you."--(II. Cor. xiii: 11.) The sea is calm when not disturbed by wind. The man who wishes to introduce the reign of peace into the world, must eliminate the *mine* and *thine*, those burning words, which cause so many wars and kindle so many fires.

Pastor of souls! The happiness of your life and the success of your ministry depend in a great measure on the maintenance of peace between you and your fellow-man, whether he be your superior, your equal, or your inferior. Let nothing trouble the harmony of your relations with any of them. "*If it be possible, as much as in you, having peace with all men.*"--(Rom. xii: 18.) And He will prove to be a tender Father to you, who calls Himself the Father of the peace-makers. He will anticipate your wishes and load you with the blessings of His grace, and you will have power to work out the salvation of your brethren.

Much self-abnegation, however, is needed to live in peace with those who hate peace; for this, says St. Augustine, is the point recommended in almost every page of the Scripture: *Prope nulla est pagina, quæ nos non admoneat . . . cum his qui oderunt pacem esse debere pacificos.* —(Ep. 249.) Let us hear St. Paul: "*I, therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called. With all humility and mildness, with patience supporting one another in charity. Careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.*" —(Eph. iv: 1.) In another passage he is more pressing yet: "*If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ; if any comfort of charity, if any society of the spirit, if any bowels of commiseration, fulfill ye my joy, that you may be of one mind, having the same charity, being of one accord, agreeing in sentiment.*"—(Ph. ii: 1, 2.) To wage implacable war against sin, not to offend the sinner, and always to love him, is a work which none but a generous and attentive charity can perform.

3d Point. *Peace with oneself, by fighting against oneself.* Such is one of the meanings of the following words of our Savior: "*I came not to send peace, but the sword. A man's enemies shall be they of his own household.*"--(Mat. x: 34, 36.) It will only be by continual struggling against my inclinations, that I will obtain that equanimity which will render me superior to all events. Peace is the fruit of victory, as victory is also the fruit of noble struggles. He who lives in the presence of God, understands the following words of the following of Christ: "*Quandocumque homo aliquid inordinate appetit, statim in se inquie-*

tus fit."—(Im. l. 1, c. vi.) For such is the human heart; it cannot be without desires, and if it do not curb and guide them, they become its torturers. Let us never tire of meditating these maxims: *Resistendo passionibus inventitur pax vera cordis. . . . Non est ergo pax in corde hominis carnalis, non in homine exterioribus dedito.*—(Ib. l. 1, c. 6.) *Beati simplices quoniam multam pacem habebunt.*"—(l. i, c. 2.) The man of pure intentions, disengaged from passions, elevated above common opinion, and seeking God alone, *potest stabilis corde esse*"(—Ib. l. i, c. 3.) Many, however, are the combats to be fought and sustained, to conquer oneself and to place oneself entirely under the empire of grace. *Quare quidam sanctorum tam perfecti et contemplativi fuerunt? Quia omnino se ipsos mortificare ab omnibus terrenis desideriis studuerunt; et ideo totis medullis cordis Deo inhærere, atque libere sibi vacare potuerunt.*—(Ib. l. i, c. 11.) Hence, let us draw this inference, which cannot be considered too deeply: *Qui melius scit pati, majorem tenebit pacem Iste est victor sui et dominus mundi, amicus Christi et hæres cœli.*—(Ib. l. ii, c. 3.)

Purity of heart and acquiescence to the will of God, cordial charity toward my brethren, serious struggling against myself, such are the conditions of my peace and, as a consequence, of my happiness. These I will fulfill, O my God, but help me with Thy grace. Establish within my soul the silence and calmness which Thou expectest for Thy sweet communings. In this soul of mine, I see only impatient ardor, troubles, confusion of sentiments. The tranquil desire and action, the zeal which acts without hurry, can come from Thee alone. O eternal wisdom, who art infinite in action, unalterable tranquility, who art the model and principle of true peace! Do not refuse to us this heavenly gift; it is the pledge of Thy love, the object of Thy promises, and the price of the blood of Thy Son.

1st Point. *Peace with God through innocence.* God is my center. If I act contrary to His sovereign will, by resisting Him, I escape from the sphere of my rest. My religion, my reason, rise up against me. Peace is the work of justice. When a soul has the purity which comes from justice, nothing prevents it from resting in God.

2d Point. *Peace with our neighbor through charity.* If I treat

others as I desire to be treated by them, bearing with them, sparing, excusing them . . . discord between me and them becomes impossible. From the moment that the God of charity is with me, the God of peace is also with me. But we have need of much patience and vigilance, to live in peace with the very persons who hate peace.

3d Point. *Peace with oneself by struggling against oneself.* Peace is the fruit of victory, just as victory is the result of a battle. If I be master of myself, I will be, in a manner, master over everything. In resisting passions is true peace to be found. *Qui melius scit pati majorem tenebit pacem.*—(Im.)

LX. MEDITATION.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER—THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

—(J. x: 11, 16.)

1st.—DESCRIBED BY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

2d.—THE PRIEST WHO REALIZES THE DESCRIPTION OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

1st Point. *The good shepherd portrayed by Jesus Christ.* Take and read, O you, whom the Son of God has associated to Himself in the government of souls. Be full of esteem for the noble task imposed on you: but be filled with the spirit of your ministry. I am the good shepherd! The Son of God teaches us by those words, that no one is a good shepherd, except inasmuch as He resembles or endeavors to resemble Him. He is about to draw His own picture. Let us study it.

"*The good shepherd gives His life for His sheep.*" This first trait teaches us what should be the habitual disposition of the good shepherd, and what he actually does for his flock. He is ever ready to expose himself to temporal death to preserve his sheep from eternal death, and to sacrifice himself if necessary for their salvation, as Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself for us. He is not afraid of the wolves, throws himself right among them when circumstances require it, and there,

acts with the meekness of a sheep without sharing its timidity. He suffers himself to be wounded and torn by those cruel wolves, and his patience often transforms them into sheep.

He gives his life, a condition of absolute necessity. It was acted upon to the letter in the early ages of the Church, in those happy times when all the faithful deserved to be called saints. How admirable was the priesthood in those times! To accept the pastoral charge was to consecrate oneself to martyrdom, and St. Paul was right when he praised those who ambitioned to enjoy this honor. "*If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.*"—(I. Tim. iii : 1.) This was to aspire to die in tortures, for the salvation of souls. *Tunc repersa sunt ovilia sanguine pastorum, maduerunt campi cœdibus pastoram, cruentata sunt pascua vulneribus pastorum, sacrata est terra corporibus pastorum, dilatatum est cœlum animabus quas pastores pro suis ovibus posuerunt.*—(Rup. in Joan. c. x.) O pastors, forget not what kind of men they were, whose ministry you are called to continue. If you be disposed to die for the flock which Jesus Christ confided to you, will you refuse to devote to it your labors, your liberty, your repose? . . . . Will you be wanting in vigilance to discover and banish from it all evils? Will you fail in courage in its defence, in attention and prudence to lead it to the best pastures?

"*And I know mine, and mine know Me.*" The good shepherd knows his sheep. Living always among them, he visits them all, is accessible to all; he makes himself acquainted with their inclinations, their infirmities and their wants. *His sheep know him.* Have they not multiplied evidences of his solicitude, of his devotion to all their interests? Hence their confidence in him is unbounded.

"*As the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father, and I give my life for my sheep.*" As the Father and I love one another with an infinite love, through the knowledge that we have of each other; so the knowledge I have of my sheep, enkindles in me so ardent a love for them, that I am ready to sacrifice myself for their salvation. On Calvary and on the altar the good shepherd learns how he ought to love souls.

"*And I have other sheep, ... them also I must bring.*" The good shepherd loves all his sheep. Those which he has under his eyes do not allow him to forget those which are away, which, alas, are so

unhappy, so exposed to get lost! Jesus Christ might have resided permanently in Jerusalem, or in some other part of Judea, and might have invited to come to Him those who desired His services; but this He did not do, as He wished to give a great example to His ministers. His heart is filled with emotion at the thought of all the stray sheep of the house of Israel; and He travels through cities and villages, hamlets, deserts, ... How much did He not desire to bring into the Divine fold of His Church, all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all the Jews, all men! . . . . "*Come to me all!*" What is His object in sitting by the well of Jacob? He seeks a stray sheep, viz: the sinful woman of Samaria. He seeks another in the house of Simon the leper—it was Magdalen; at Capharnaum in the custom-house, it was St. Matthew; at Jericho, it was Zacheus; and on the road to Damascus, it was St. Paul, in whose behalf this good shepherd comes down from heaven a second time. O priest, you who will take no trouble to bring back to God those who abandoned Him, where would you yourself be, had He not deigned to seek you and solicit you with His grace? Be, therefore, such a pastor for your brethren as He was for you. Why do you confine your zeal almost exclusively to a few souls, which have little need of its efforts, contrary to the practice of Him who leaves the ninety-nine sheep in the desert to go after that which was lost.

"*He goes before them.*" This is another characteristic of the good shepherd; in place of making his flock walk ahead of him, as an imperious master, he draws it gently after him, opens the way for it, and is the first to practice all that he teaches. Bound, as I am, to employ, for the sanctification of my people, all the means in my power, can I ignore that of all those means the most efficacious is good example?

2d Point. *Which is the pastor who realizes the most perfectly this idea of the good shepherd?* It is he who imitates the most perfectly the tenderness, energy and constancy of the love of God for souls. We find its proof in both the Old and the New Testament.

The Lord commands Moses to carry the people of Israel in his arms, as a nurse carries her young infant. Writing to the Thessalonians, St. Paul says: "*We became little ones in the midst of you, as if a nurse should cherish her children.*"—(I. Thess. ii: 7.) If you wish to understand the tenderness of heart of a good pastor, hear Moses pleading the cause of his people, beseeching God to forgive them or to strike himself.

Read the whole of the second epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians: "*Who is weak and I am not weak, who is scandalized and I am not on fire? . . . . I most gladly will spend and be spent for your souls, although loving you more, I be loved less. . . . Our mouth is open to you O ye Corinthians, our heart is enlarged; you are not straitened in us.*" Recall to mind God Himself, the father and pastor of all men, comparing Himself now to the "*eagle enticing her young to fly, and hovering over them*" (Deut. xxxii: 11), now to the "*hen which doth gather her young under her wings*" (M. xxiii: 27), to shelter thee against danger. Those are touching images, but also terrible accusations against a pastor who has no affection for his flock.

A tender love, however, does not suffice; energy must be added to this love. My zeal should rise above all human considerations, above perils, even above the complaints of my sick sheep, when, for their cure, some sharp and painful remedy must be applied. Their true interests should be dearer to me than their feelings. One only thing should I fear, which is to fear something else more than God. St. John Chrysostom said to his people: *Quidquid terroris habet mundus, ego contemno. Etiamsi fluctus insurgat, etiamsi totum pelagus abversum me conturbetur, etiamsi principum furor . . . . , ego millies pro vobis immolari paratus sum.*

Finally, the love of the good pastor for his flock, is proof against all obstacles; nothing tires out his constancy; neither difficulties excited by hell, for in these he sees a sure pledge of heavenly blessings; neither indifference, or the insults he receives in exchange for his zealous efforts; his compassion for his sheep keeps apace with their ill-treatment of him. When, unfortunately, a poor sinner strays far away from God, he goes in search of this lost sheep, and continues his search without intermission. If the first attempts prove unsuccessful, he tries again, and never ceases until he has the happiness of finding the lost one.

O my God, if Thy priests loved Thee as Thou dost deserve, how many souls would they not bring back to Thee: "*Si amatis Deum, rapite omnes ad amorem Dei . . . Rapite quos potestis, hortando, portando, rogando, disputando, rationem reddendo cum mansuetudine et lenitate; rapite ad amorem, arripite, adducite attrahite quos potestis.*"—(St. Aug. in Ps. xxxii et 96.)

At the altar, honor Jesus Christ as the good shepherd, and relish the sweetness of these words: *Bone pastor, panis vere, Jesu nostri miserere*, etc. Draw determination from this magnificent promise: "*When the prince of pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never-fading crown of glory.*"—(I. Pet. v: 4.)

1st Point. *A good priest portrayed by Jesus Christ.* By saying to us that He is the good pastor, He declares that none is a good pastor, except inasmuch as he resembles Him. "*The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep;*" he is ever ready to expose his temporal life to save his people from eternal death. In the early days of the Church, the acceptance of the pastoral charge was a consecration to martyrdom. "*I know my sheep, and mine know me.*" Mutual confidence begets mutual affection. "*I give my life for my sheep.*" It is on Calvary and at the altar that the good priest learns how he ought to love souls. "*Other sheep I have.*" He loves all his sheep; he does not forget those that are absent. He goes before them, attracts them by his example.

2d Point. *Which is the priest who realizes the most perfectly this idea of the good shepherd?* It is he who imitates most closely the tenderness, the energy and constancy of the love of God for souls. Moses and St. Paul, admirable models of this tenderness. Energy should be its companion. *Ego millies pro vobis immolari paratus sum.* Contemplate the last characteristic of the good shepherd: *He goes after the lost sheep until he has found it.*

LXI. MEDITATION.

SAME DAY—JESUS MANIFESTS HIMSELF TO MANY OF HIS DISCIPLES BY THE SIDE OF THE SEA OF TIBERIAS—CONTEMPLATION.—(J. xxi.)

1st.—CONSIDER THE PERSONS MENTIONED.

2d.—HEAR THEIR WORDS.

3d.—CONSIDER THEIR ACTIONS.

FIRST PRELUDE.—After the Easter festival, the disciples went to Galilee according to the direction of the Savior. Seven of them went on board a ship for the purpose of fishing. During the night, however, they caught nothing. In the morning Jesus appears on the shore. They did not recognize Him, and He told them to cast the net to the right side of the ship. They did so, and they caught a quantity of fishes. John says to Peter: *It is the Lord.* Peter girds his garments about him, and casts himself into the sea; the others come to land in the ship. Jesus, who had Himself prepared their meal, invites them to eat.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Represent to yourself the shore of the lake, and the ship of the apostles at a short distance.

THIRD PRELUDE.—O Jesus, give me grace to know Thee, such as Thou didst appear on this day, full of charity toward Thy ministers. Give me a share in the light and purity of St. John, the fervor and devotion of St. Peter, in the happiness which all experienced in this miraculous draught of fishes, and during the repast which followed.

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons.* Consider the apostles who lived in poverty and by the labor of their hands. See them in their ship; they all work together in perfect union. They look somewhat sad, because of the uselessness of their efforts, for, says the Gospel, "That night they *caught nothing.*" . . . Ah, if they knew how great will be their joy in a few moments. Contemplate the Savior on the shore. "*Jesus stood on the shore.*" He looks kindly at the apostles,

and comes to comfort them. He is touched with compassion, seeing that they labored in vain, that they are hungry and have nothing to eat. Thus, O my God, Thou thinkest of me and of my troubles. When I consider myself forsaken, Thou art quite near me. Many times in the past, when I saw no issue from a difficult situation, Thou didst visit me interiorly, and assist me with efficacy. What should I not obtain from Thy infinite mercy, were I to pray to Thee with confidence, since Thou grantest me so many favors, which I had not even thought of asking?

2d and 3d Points. *Consider the actions, hear the words of the parties mentioned.* Jesus in all circumstances aims at convincing His ministers of these two very important truths: The first, that He watches over their interests with tender care, and that never, at the appointed time, will His assistance be wanting to them, either in temporal or spiritual matters; the second, that of themselves, and without Him they can absolutely do nothing, either for their salvation or for that of their brethren. How considerate He was in asking His apostles if they had nothing to eat, so as to bring them to acknowledge their need, and predispose them for the favor He was about to confer. "*Children, have you any meat? They answered Him, No.*" Let us be open in the avowal of our miseries; let us frankly avow that we have nothing, not even that which is most necessary to us, neither humility, nor light, nor courage, and that we expect all from His Divine goodness. Jesus says to them: "*Cast the net to the right side of the ship . . . they cast, therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.*" A blessing so unexpected filled them with admiration, and *the disciple . . . whom Jesus loved, said to Peter, "It is the Lord."*

St. John is the first to recognize Jesus Christ, and St. Jerome assigns the reason for this in the following way; "*Solus virgo virginem agnoscit.*"—(L. i, cont. Jov.) How penetrating are the eyes of purity; how it facilitates the sight of God.—(Mat. v: 8.) O Lord when will it be given to me to see Thee wherever Thou art, and to exclaim with St. John at every moment and in every place: "*It is the Lord!*" Why should I fix my attention on creatures only? It is the Lord Himself who gives me joy in this success, who afflicts me in this trial . . . "*It is the Lord.*" He permits this humiliation, this adversity. The painful and useless labor of the night was necessary, says St. Gregory, to prepare for the admiration aroused by the miraculous draught of fishes or-

dered by the Lord. O Jesus, purify me ; I will then love Thee ; I will be beloved by Thy Father and by Thee, and Thou wilt condescend to manifest Thyself to me.

St. Peter, at the thought that it was the Lord who stood on the shore, listens only to his ardent love, girds his garments around him and casts himself into the sea ; the others arrive in the boat. There are two ways of reaching Jesus : The first, an extraordinary way, which is not to be censured or to be always followed ; the second, an ordinary one, with which we ought to be satisfied. Amongst the most perfect servants of God, there are some who cannot be retained in the ship. They follow their own impulses and throw themselves into the bitter waters of sufferings, in order the sooner to reach Jesus Christ crucified. There are others of a more calm and peaceful character, who remain tranquil in the vessel of Providence, enjoying the favors of their Master when He is present, and calmly waiting for His return when He is absent.[1] Let us admire, and in the measure of the graces which is given us, let us imitate the fervor of St. Peter. In his eagerness to approach Jesus Christ, he neither considers danger nor hardships; he was, indeed, the first to reach the shore. There is nothing which, so much as generosity, hastens the progress of a soul to its union with God.

Consider what is passing on the shore when they are all assembled together. What do the apostles see first? "They saw a fire kindled and a fish laid on, and bread." Everything prepared by the Savior Himself. He invites them to partake of food, of which they much stood in need. "Come and dine." He does more ; He helps them with His own Divine hands. "*Jesus cometh and taketh bread and giveth them, and fish in like manner.*" . . . O priest of God, will you always wound the heart of Jesus by refusing to confide in Him? Do not give way to trouble, in seeking the things necessary for your sustenance ; He promises to provide. Providence is yet more paternal toward you than toward others ; you labor to promote His interests ; He does not forget yours. Whilst you labor to extend His kingdom on earth, He is preparing for you a delightful banquet in heaven. He will soon say to you, "*Come*, nourish yourself with My divinity, *enter you into the joy of your Master.*" In the meantime let us nourish ourselves with the Eucharistic

1. If He comes to me, said St. Francis de Sales, I shall receive Him joyfully. If He come not, I shall not hurry to go and meet Him.

bread. Let us go every day to repair our strength and renew our fervor at this sacred table, which is the centre and source of apostolic zeal.

What passes in the minds of the apostles during this blessed repast? The presence of their Master risen from the dead, His countenance, His voice, the affection He shows for them, the great power He displays, the kind familiarity He uses with them, everything in Him delights them, fills them with a joy inexpressible. None of them, however, dares to ask Him who He is. They know that He is the Lord. They are satisfied with adoring Him, with enjoying in silence His Divine conversation, and His kind looks. . . . The charm which captivates a soul inflamed with the love of God, and lost in the contemplation of His grandeurs, leaves it only the power to admire. With perfect tranquillity it loses itself in that abyss of perfections which it discovers. It is the possession of sovereign happiness, already inaugurated on earth; it is already here below, a torrent of delights which inebriates. What shall be the eternal felicity of heaven?

Colloquy with our Lord. Adore His power and bounty which provide for the wants of all His creatures. Adore yet more this Providence of God so touchingly attentive to the wants of His ministers. Thank Him for the particular grace He has conferred on you. Cast all your solicitude with entire confidence into His hands, and, being free from all other preoccupation, give yourself exclusively to the work of procuring His glory by gaining hearts to Him.

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons.* The apostles who live by the labor of their hands. They are sad because their labor was useless. The Savior on the shore. He comes to comfort His dear apostles. O my God, when I think myself forsaken by Thee, Thou art quite near me.

2d and 3d Points. *Consider the actions, hear the words.* Jesus continually aims at convincing us of these two important truths: First, that He constantly watches over our interests, that His assistance will never be wanting. In the second place, that of ourselves we can do absolutely nothing. Humility, confidence. Let us, like the apostles, confess that we are destitute. How plentiful the draught of fishes, when Christ's direction was followed! St. John exclaims: "*It is the*

Lord." He was more pure than the others ; he was the first to recognize Jesus. St. Peter casts himself into the sea ; his companions come in their ship. There are two ways to go to Jesus ; let us follow the one which Himself laid out for us. Let us, however, admire the fervor of Peter. Nothing hastens so much progress in perfection as generosity. What is passing on the shore? What means this repast prepared and served by the hands of Jesus Christ? What passes in the souls of the apostles whilst partaking of this miraculous meal? Let us admire the touching goodness of the Savior in favor of those who left all in order to follow Him.

LXII. MEDITATION.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER—PATRONAGE OF ST. JOSEPH.

1st.—POWER OF ST. JOSEPH IN HEAVEN.

2d.—OUR RELIANCE UPON HIS LOVE FOR US.

3d.—REQUISITES FOR SECURING A GREAT SHARE IN HIS PROTECTION.

1st Point. *Power of St Joseph in heaven.* We can form a judgment from the teaching of the Church on the subject, and by the functions which he filled on earth.

I. The liturgy of the Church is not merely her public and solemn prayer, it is also her popular and authentic teaching. What do we discover in consulting the offices of the two principal feasts of St. Joseph, but especially that of his patronage? We find that the prevailing idea of the Church regarding St. Joseph is, that unlimited power has been granted in heaven to the chaste husband of Mary, as it had been granted in Egypt to Joseph, the son of Jacob. In reading the office of this day, we imagine that we hear the Lord saying to us what Pharaoh said to the Egyptians: "*Go to Joseph;* I have deposited My authority in his hands; he is the medium of my graces, enjoys the same power of granting as Myself." "*He established him lord over his house and manager of all his possessions.*" This is what the Church repeats exult-

ingly adding: *Alleluia, alleluia!* Such is the judgment of the Church regarding the credit of this admirable saint. Let us consider the functions which he fulfilled.

II. In the days of which we speak, God had on earth a two-fold treasure, the object of all His complacencies: Jesus, whom He proclaimed His *well-beloved Son*, and Mary, who had said of herself by the mouth of the inspired writer: "*God has possessed me from the beginning of His ways.*" To St. Joseph He confided this twofold priceless treasure. He established him the head of His family, master over His house, steward over the most precious of His possessions; He gave him over Jesus the authority of a father over His Son, and over Mary the authority of a husband over his wife.

This authority of Joseph was fully acknowledged, for there never was a son more obedient, never was a wife more submissive. We must not imagine that these glorious titles of St. Joseph, to which so marvellous a power was attached, are in a manner disregarded, since he is in heaven. It cannot be so, and the well-grounded sentiment of the Church is, that the foster-father of Jesus Christ possesses in heaven unlimited power of intercession. Whilst some holy and learned doctors have taught that Mary approaches the throne of her Son, not as a suppliant but as a sovereign, not to ask, but to command; others have said, speaking of St. Joseph, that the prayers of such a husband and father amount to commandments regarding his spouse and his son; that Almighty God, far from depriving him of his glorious privilege, has enhanced them in his life of glory. They have declared that some saints are invoked for particular necessities, as if the power to assist us were divided amongst them; but that St. Joseph has received universal power to assist us efficaciously in all our wants of body and soul; that as the Son of God never refused anything to His tutor, whilst living under his dependence, He, *a fortiori*, grants him all that he asks, now that He is sitting at the right hand of His Father.

On this ground, the Catholic Church invites us to have recourse to Saint Joseph with the same confidence that the Egyptians did the first, to whom they said: "*Our life is in thy hand; only let my Lord look favorably upon us, and we will gladly serve the King.*"—(Gen. xlvii.)

2d Point. *We may rely upon the love of this illustrious saint.* In the designs of God everything is foreseen. In creating the heart of

Joseph, He was creating the heart of the spouse of Mary, and of the foster-father of Jesus. He wished that there should exist in this visible Trinity, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, a conformity of affection resembling that which unites the three adorable persons of the Trinity, invisible and eternal. On the models of the hearts of Jesus and Mary, the heart of Joseph was formed ; and from this standpoint we should endeavor to conceive, as far as we can, the perfections which adorned it. Some of these were energy, and elevation of sentiments necessary to those who have great destinies to accomplish, but principally sensibility, compassion, a desire for doing good, noble inclinations developed by continual and extraordinary graces lavished upon it during thirty years, through the grateful love of Jesus and Mary. Could they more fittingly reward his devotion toward them, than in constantly increasing his charity, and rendering more perfect the resemblance of his heart with their own?

To ask if we may rely upon the favorable dispositions of St. Joseph, if he be willing to help Christians to save their souls, to assist priests and pastors in their labors, to advance the glory of God, would be as much as to ask if we are the objects of the affection of Jesus and Mary, for it is from their hearts that he derives his feelings toward us. It would be as much as to ask if a good father desires the happiness of his children, for St. Joseph has adopted us all in Jesus Christ, of whom we are the members, and who desires to call us His brethren ; it would be to question the zeal of this great saint. From the moment that the angel had revealed to him the mystery of the incarnation accomplished in his august spouse, his life was a continual contemplation. What did he contemplate, unless the love of God for us, impersonated in the Word made flesh? "*God has so loved the world.*" Ah, how often must that cry of admiration have burst forth from his heart. When he beheld the Divine infant in the stable, in the arms of His mother, or in his own ; when he lavished upon, or received from Him most tender caresses ; when he saw Him growing up under his eyes, and later on helping him in his humble avocation ; when he heard Jesus in His heavenly conversation, making known to him His intentions in coming into the world, and what He would suffer for the glory of God and the salvation of souls? Was not all this, as it were, new fuel to increase the flame of his love of God and of men?

We have not the right idea of the love of Jesus Christ for us, if we do not know that He neither did nor possessed anything on earth save for our interests. The fact of His choosing a father and mother, and the fact of their possession of such a strong love for our welfare, convey to us the knowledge of our Lord being forced, in a manner, to yield to their requests those graces which, of ourselves, we could not have obtained. The Church declares it so, positively, in the orison of St. Joseph: *Ut quod possibilitas nostra non obtinet ejus nobis intercessione donetur.* Let us all, therefore, go to Joseph; but let priests remember that they have particular claims to his assistance; for, as they labor for the glory of God, and for the purpose of spreading the knowledge of Jesus and Mary, and of saving souls, they realize the most ardent desires of his heart.

3d Point. *How can we secure for ourselves a greater share in the protection of St. Joseph?* This great saint comes to the help of those who do not know him, or who do not honor him, though they know him, and in this, as in everything else, he is the faithful imitator of Jesus and of Mary. However, he always has, as they, stronger affections, and more generous devotedness for those who love him. *I love those who love me.* The more we declare ourselves his children, by invoking him with confidence, the more does his heart act as the heart of a father. It is known how grateful St. Theresa was to St. Joseph for the favors she had received from him. After making mention of this, she adds: "For the love of God, I beg of those who do not believe me, to make an experiment of it. They will experience how advantageous it is to have recourse to this glorious patriarch, and to honor him in an especial manner."

Let us, therefore, to-day take him for the first of our patrons, the most intimate of our friends, and our most powerful intercessor. God chose him from among all men, to be His faithful co-operator in the accomplishment of the greatest of His designs. "*Solum in terris magni consilii coadjutorem fidelissimum.*"—(St. Bernard.) O priest of God, most useful will be to you his co-operation in everything you will undertake for your sanctification, and the salvation of your neighbor. Consecrate yourself to him, or renew with great fervor the act of your former consecration. Give him as father to your spiritual family, as pastor to your flock. Decide to-day, in a clear, positive manner, what

testimony of your love you will offer St. Joseph every year, every week, every day. If you spread his devotion with perseverance, your zeal will be agreeable to him, through the many occasions you will afford him of assisting souls; and, as a reward, he will be the means of abundant graces coming down upon your labors. "*Memento igitur nostri, beate Joseph, et tuæ orationis suffragio apud tuum putativum filium intercede, sed et beatissimam virginem sponsam tuam nobis propitiam redde.*"—(St. Bern. Sen., serm. 1 de St. Joseph.)

1st Point. *How great in heaven is the credit of St. Joseph?* The Church sees a symbol of his power in that of the son of Jacob in Egypt. "*God established him master over His house, and governor over all that He possesses.*" In the days of our saint, God had on earth two treasures really priceless, namely, Jesus and Mary. To St. Joseph He gave over Jesus the authority of a father over his son; and over Mary the authority of a husband over his wife. Never was there any authority more perfectly respected than his was. Is it less respected in heaven? Thence came the feeling, so well grounded, that St. Joseph has unlimited power over the hearts of Jesus and Mary. The Church, therefore, invites us to turn to the second Joseph with the same confidence which animated the Egyptians, when they said to the first Joseph: "*Our life is in thy hand, only let my Lord look favorably upon us.*"

2d Point. *We may rely upon the love of this great saint.* The heart of Joseph was modeled on the hearts of Jesus and Mary, for everything in the designs of God is foreseen. Jesus and Mary, in return for the services which Joseph rendered them, ceased not, during thirty years, to labor for his greater perfection. Consider the result.

3d Point. *How we can obtain a greater share in his protection.* He entertains particular affections for those who love and honor him. The more we will act as his children, the more will his heart be for us the heart of a father. How many prodigies have occured in our own days to strengthen what St. Theresa has written on this subject? What testimonies of our devotion will we show him henceforward?

LXIII. MEDITATION.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER—JESUS APPEARS TO THE APOSTLES ON A MOUNTAIN OF GALILEE[1]—MISSION HE GIVES THEM.—(Mat. xxviii.)

1st.—NATURE OF THE APOSTOLIC MISSION.
2d.—THE SAVIOR SUSTAINS IT BY HIS ALMIGHTY POWER.

1st Point. *Nature of the apostolic mission*—"*The eleven disciples went into Galilee unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them, and seeing Him they adored.*"—(Mat. xxviii : 16, 17.) Some, however, doubted; this doubt, however, was one of the imagination, brought about by surprise; it was not entirely free, and was soon to be dispelled. Adore the Savior with the apostles; believe firmly, and hear with respect all that He is about to say to you. You have a great share in the mission confided to them. "*All power is given to me in heaven and on earth; going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to obey all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" Through His resurrection, Jesus entered into possesion of His unlimited power. He has it in heaven, whither He will ascend and where He will sit at the right hand of the Father; from heaven He will send the Holy Ghost, and thence He will attract to Him His faithful servants, and associate them to His eternal reign. He has all power on earth where He will found the Church, then protect, extend and perpetuate this institution.

How admirable His power is! What other lips could have dared to pronounce the words: "*All power is given to me in heaven and on earth?*" They will soon be realized by the mysteries of the Ascension of Pentecost, and by the success of the apostolic preaching. "*And all the kings of the earth shall adore Him, all nations shall serve Him.*"—(Ps. lqxi: 11.) O power, infinitely amiable! How well placed it is in

1. Although St. Matthew speaks of the apostles only, it is considered probable, and St. Jerome is of this opinion, that it was on this occasion that Jesus Christ showed Himself to more than five hundred of His disciples.—(I. Cor. xv: 6.)

the hands of Him who deigned to die for us, and who will use it for our good only! He does not say: "Go, avenge My death; draw down the weight of My anger upon those who crucified Me." . . . He says, "Go, labor for the salvation of men, draw them from their errors, remit their sins, let them receive through you all the graces which I have deserved for them, and of which I commit to you the dispensation. I do not restrict your zeal to the limits of one nation, by saying to you, not to go in the way of the Gentiles; I send you to all nations, to all peoples. I will soon ascend into heaven; teach all men how they may ascend to heaven after Me. The means to reach it will be faith, baptism, the observance of all My precepts.

Such was the mission of the apostles; such is also your own, O priest of God! Are you not delighted to be called to continue such noble works? Is it not a glorious work to carry the name of Jesus through the world, to induce all men to adore it, to save souls which this good Master has so loved? Who would be unwilling to go over the world to instruct and lead up to heaven creatures which He redeemed at the price of His blood? To reign over souls in time, to reign with them in eternity, was the chief work of the goodness and love of Jesus Christ for souls. They who bring them salvation are, as it were, the triumphal chariot. "*Thy chariots are salvation.*"—(Heb. iii: 8.) Return thanks to God for your vocation, and let us remember that its spirit is "*to seek and to save that which was lost.*"

2d Point. *The almighty power of Jesus Christ is the support of the apostolic mission.* "*Behold I am with you all days to the consummation of the world.*" A God-man makes this promise. He had just said: "All power is given Me in heaven and on earth," and He now adds "and behold I am with you all days to the consummation of the world." St. Matthew ends his Gospel as Ezechiel ends his prophecy. "*And the name of the city from that day, the Lord is there.*" Since that day, behold the name of the Church founded by the Savior is, *The Lord is here* But what is the nature of this presence, and what are its effects?

By pledging Himself to be with the apostles to the consummation of the world, Jesus promises to be with those who will continue their labors, as truly as with themselves.—He will be with them to direct them on the right and safe path. Let them remain united to Him, and

docile to His inspirations, they will certainly arrive at the perfection which God demands of them, and will lead souls to the perfection proper to their state and condition.—He will accompany them like a tender Father, providing for all their spiritual and temporal wants. Is He not the source of all good?—He will be ever present to protect them from all dangers, as far as the interests of their happiness and of their sacerdotal duties will require. What have we to fear when Jesus will be with us and near us? "*Let me beside Thee, and let any man's hand fight against me.*"—(Job xvii : 3.)

With Jesus, St. Felix found a rampart against his persecutors in a spider's web; whence came the saying: *Præsente Christo, aranea fit murus; absente Christo, murus fit aranea.*—He will be present with them with His might and force, enabling them to triumph over the world, the flesh and the devil. They can do all things in Him who strengthens them. This irresistible power they find in their faith and confidence in Jesus Christ. "*If thou canst believe, all things are possible to Him who believes.*" . . . "*They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength.*"—(Is. lx : 31.) A holy doctor adds: *Propriam in divinam.* It is their love of Jesus Christ. "*Love is strong as death:* it is their prayer offered in the name of Jesus Christ. *If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you.*"

Finally, Christ will be present with His ministers, really and corporally in the holy Eucharist, whereby earth becomes heaven for us. The altar, the tabernacle, behold the invincible defence of the Church, the power and consolation of the good priest. "*The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing . . . though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death I will fear no evils, because Thou art with me. . . Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me.*"—(Ps. xxii.)

I fancy that to dispel my vain terrors, my good angel says to me, what another angel said to a martyr in delivering him from his torments: *Gaudeas et corroboreris in sapientia et gratia Domini nostri Jesu Christi. Ecce enim tecum est Dominus. . . . Consumma ergo cursum decertationis tuæ, et venies ad Dominum nostrum, accipiens coronam immortalitatis.*—(Surius, 7 feb.) It is rather our Savior Himself, who in the silence of the sanctuary repeats to His ministers through the course of ages: "Behold I am with you all days to the

consummation of the world." As long as I will have Jesus in the sacrament of His love, feeble, weak as I am, I will be all powerful. "I shall want nothing;" nothing shall be able either to injure or to resist me. I am less afraid of my profound miseries, than I am full of confidence in His infinite bounty.

1st Point. *Nature of the apostolic mission.* Let us adore Jesus Christ surrounded by His apostles, and hear what He says. "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth" . . . What other tongue would have dared pronounce such words? The truth of them has been made evident. The Ascension, Pentecost, the triumph of the Church. . . . He says not, go, avenge My death. . . . but go, save man. Let us bless the Lord for our admirable vocation, and let us remember its spirit: "To seek and to save that which was lost."

2d Point. *Jesus Christ by His almighty power is the support of the apostolic mission.* "*Behold I am with you all days until the consummation of the world.*" He is present to guide so that you may yourself reach and enable others to reach perfection and happiness.—He is present to provide you with everything necessary for salvation; He is present to protect you against all peril according to the designs of His providence.—He is really and corporally present in the holy Eucharist. My confidence in Thee, O Lord, is unbounded, notwithstanding my profound miseries.

LXIV. MEDITATION.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER—ROGATION DAYS.

These days of solemn supplication, by which the Church prepares herself to celebrate the Ascension of Jesus Christ, recall to mind two qualities which have always distinguished good priests :

1st.—A GOOD PRIEST HAS GREAT LOVE FOR PRAYER.

2d.—IS VERY ZEALOUS TO INSPIRE THE LOVE AND PRACTICE OF PRAYER.

1st Point. *A good priest has great love for prayer.* In prayer we find honor, graces and consolation.

I. In the eyes of the world it is an honor to approach great men, to converse with them, to be familiar with them. But is there a greater honor, anything so worthy of ambition, as to entertain with God a respectful familiarity, to speak to Him as a friend to a friend? This is for a good priest an honor of every moment, for his life is a continual prayer. Though not always in the actual exercise of vocal or mental prayer, as he always acts for God, seeking to please Him only in everything, he thus accomplishes the precept of the Gospel : *Oportet semper orare.* This prayer is a sacred bond which unites him always to God, and preserves him in His intimacy.

II. Will you, says St. Bonaventure, bear patiently adversities and trials, overcome temptations, break off disorderly affections ; will you know and escape the snares of the devil, excite and strengthen your soul by good thoughts and pious designs. . . . If you wish to eradicate your faults and acquire virtues, raise yourself up to contemplation and to the enjoyment of heavenly delights. Be a man of prayer. We often approach the altar with tepid and indifferent dispositions. If we pray and persist in prayer, grace suddenly comes upon us, our heart expands, the wholesome waters of piety inundate our souls. St. Augustine affirms that our progress in sanctity follows in

due proportion to our progress in the spirit of prayer: *Recte novit vivere, qui recte novit orare.*

A good priest asks nothing from creatures as weak and indigent as himself. From Thee, O my God, he expects all. Thou hast put into his hands the key of Thy treasures, prayer, and he uses it to open that treasure and to utilize its stores. He knows that by pledging Thy Divine word, "*Ask and you shall receive*," by binding Thyself with an oath, *Amen, Amen, I say to you*, by pledging, as it were, the very person of Thy Son, Thou hast made Thyself powerless to reject our prayers. He is acquainted with Thy promises, knows Thy fidelity to accomplish them, and the inexhaustible riches of Thy grace in behalf of all those who invoke Thee. He knows as well, that hadst Thou not promised anything, our confidence alone would oblige Thee to assist and save us; for this confidence of ours honors Thee, and proves to Thee that we well know the meaning of Thy name. Thou dost desire that we begin our prayer by the words *our Father*.

III. Many consolations are annexed to this exercise: "*Is any of you sad? let him pray.*"—(Jac. v: 13.) How sweet for a soul which groans under the weight of its miseries, to cast itself into the bosom of God, as a child into the arms of its father, to speak to Him of its troubles, to show Him its injuries, and expose to Him the reason of its alarm. . . . Is not this loving, unreserved confidence the charming feature of our communications with the Lord? It must be, indeed, that prayer fills the heart with unspeakable delights, since it so often changed a bleak desert into a paradise. Were there lives more happy than those of the Pauls and Anthonies? . . . . and yet their only consolation was prayer. A certain good priest representing to himself the most painful contradiction, the most bitter sorrow which might overtake him, declared that in case that such trials were sent him, a quarter of an hour's meditation would suffice him to resist that violent shock, and restore peace to his soul. Hear what St. Bernard wrote to a man who remained undecided between solitude and the world: *Oh, si semel paululum quid de adipe frumenti unde satiatur Jerusalem degustasses, quam libenter (mundo) suas crustas rodendas relinqueres!*

A good priest always makes his own cause one with the cause of the souls confided to his care. He desires that at the last day they may speak to the judge in his favor, that he had borne their infirmities.

Hence prayer and preaching have been at all times the most powerful weapons of zealous priests. "*But we will give ourselves continually to prayer.*"—(Acts vi : 4.) The spirit of prayer is a grace of our state, one of the effects of the imposition of hands. I would be indeed unfortunate if I no longer felt its beneficial influence. It is time that I follow the admonition of St. Paul to St. Timothy : "*I admonish thee that thou stir up the grace of God which is in thee by the imposition of my hands.*"—(II. Tim. i : 6.)

2d Point. *Good priests have always been remarkable by their zeal to inspire the love of prayer.* The neglect of this holy practice, which has become so common, is one of the most deplorable evils of our age, and a most alarming symptom of its diseased state. Prayer is the soul of religion, and the great means of salvation given to man. It is an acknowledgment of my nothingness, a declaration that I adore God as the arbiter of all our destinies, that I believe Him powerful enough to grant me what I ask, and good enough to do it. By praying to Him. I acknowledge that I can neither help myself nor receive help from creatures as weak as myself ; but that I dare to expect everything from His infinite power and goodness. He is honored according to His desires by this homage of my dependence, of my confidence and of my love. I am encouraged to hope to receive everything from Him as long as I continue to pray.

St. Augustine says, explaining the (verse 20, Ps. lxv): "*Blessed be God who has not turned away my prayer nor His mercy from me:*" "There is an eternal alliance between the prayer of man and the mercy of the Lord. Do not cease to pray ; God will not withdraw His mercy from you." But if I forsake prayer, can I rightfully entertain any hope of salvation? Should I, in that case, be a worshipper of God? A God to whom I do not pray is a God of whom I have no need, one who would be no God for me? It is by calling upon Thee, O Lord, to help my misery, that I acknowledge Thee for my God. "*In what day soever I shall call upon Thee, behold I know Thou art my God.*"—(Ps. lx : 10.)

The men of our days have ceased to pray, and the knowledge of this fills with bitterness the souls of those who love the Church and their brethren. On this account, good priests frequently speak on prayer, its power, its necessity. They love to show how easy is its practice, to explain its conditions and different forms. We should read

attentively what St. Liguori says in his short treatise on the importance of prayer. He begins it in this wise: "Of all the spiritual works which I have published, this is unquestionably one of the most useful; for prayer is an indispensable and sure means to attain salvation. I wish I could have printed as many copies of this work as there are Christians on earth; I would like it to be in the hands of every man, so that every man without exception might understand how necessary it is to pray to obtain salvation. It grieves me much to know that preachers seldom speak of it in their sermons and exhortations, and that works of piety do not sufficiently insist on this subject." The saint ends by saying: "How many unfortunate souls there are which commit sin and continue to live in sin, and are lost in the end, because they do not pray? And what is most deplorable, few preachers and confessors make it a duty to inculcate the practice of prayer. . . . As for me, I often say, and I will always repeat: the whole affair of salvation depends upon prayer; that all spiritual writers in their books, all the preachers in the pulpit, all the confessors in the sacred tribunal, should inculcate nothing so much as prayer. I wish they would repeat continually, pray, pray, and cease not to pray; for if you pray, you are sure of being saved; if you pray not, your damnation is certain."

At the altar, beseech our Lord to infuse into the hearts of His ministers the spirit of grace and prayer. "*I shall pour down upon the house of David . . . the spirit of grace and of prayer*," so that thence it may spread through the whole body of the Church; at this price can salvation be obtained.

1st Point. *Good priests have always been remarkable by their love of prayer.* It gains for them so much honor, so many graces and consolations. What is there more honorable for a man than to speak to God as a friend speaking to his friend? This honor is continual, for a good priest always prays, either actually or by intention. In prayer he acquires all the benefits that he desires, patience, light, strength. . . . Our progress in sanctity is always in keeping with our progress in the spirit of prayer. Oh, how sweet for a soul which groans under the weight of its miseries, to be permitted to cast itself in the bosom of God, as a child into the arms of his father. Prayer changed bleak

deserts into a paradise, and peopled them with saints. The pastor needs to pray for his flock as much as for himself.

2d Point. *Good priests love to inculcate the esteem and practice of prayer.* The neglect of this holy practice is one of the evils of our age. Prayer is the soul of religion, and the great means of salvation given to man. There is no religion where there is no prayer. A God to whom I do not pray, is one of whom, in my estimation, I have no need. He ceases to be a God for me. On this account good priests love to speak frequently on this subject. If I inspire my people with the love of prayer, I place in its hands the key of heaven. Let us not fail to read attentively the short treatise of St. Liguori on the importance of prayer.

LXV. MEDITATION.

ASCENSION OF JESUS CHRIST—MEDITATION OF ST. BONAVENTURE.

There is in this work a contemplation on this mystery.—(See Vol. 1, p. 746.) This subject is treated by the seraphic doctor, in a manner so devout, that we think it useful to give here the substance of His meditation. It may be divided as follows :—

1st.—IMMEDIATE PREPARATIONS FOR THE MYSTERY OF THE ASCENSION.

2d.—ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE MYSTERY.

1st Point. *Preparations for the mystery of the Ascension.* The disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ had become so much attached to Him, on account of His wonderful meekness and mercy, that they could not bear the idea of separation from Him. Although He had told them that it was expedient for them that He should go, the mere thought of a separation filled their hearts with sorrow. On the fortieth day after His resurrection, He took with Him the holy patriarchs, and the other just whom He had liberated from limbo, and came to His apostles, who were in the cenacle with His mother and other disciples ; and as a mark

of affection, He would once more eat with them, before going up to His Father in heaven. Whilst full of joy they partook of this last repast with their Master. Jesus said to them: "It is time that I return to Him who sent Me; but you stay in the city, till you be endowed with power from on high. . . . You will afterward go through the whole world to preach My Gospel, baptizing those who will believe; and you shall be witnesses to Me, even to the uttermost parts of the earth." The disciples are in the cenacle; they converse with their Master, they are delighted to be in His presence; nevertheless, they are troubled, for they think of His departure. Consider His mother, who sat near Him. When this most tender mother heard the announcement of His departure, she certainly must have leaned fondly on the bosom of Jesus. Surely she was much better entitled to this privilege than St. John. She must have wept bitterly as she said to her son: "O my Son, if Thou wilt depart from us, take me with Thee?" Our Lord comforted her, saying: "Pray, O mother, be not overcome with sorrow, for I go to My Father, and it is preferable that you should remain some time longer on earth, to strengthen those who believe in Me, and I will then come to you and take you up to the abode of My glory." At these words the blessed mother said: "O my Son, let Thy will be done! I am willing to remain and to die in behalf of those souls which Thou hast redeemed with Thy blood; but do Thou remember me!"

The Lord comforted the holy virgin, Mary Magdalen and the disciples also, saying: "Let not your heart be troubled, neither have any fear; I will not leave you orphans. I go and come back to you; and I shall always be with you." Finally, He told them all to go up the mountain of Olives, for thence He intended to raise Himself up to heaven. He then disappeared. His mother and the others went in haste to the summit of the mountain, and there the Savior appeared to them again.

2d Point. *Accomplishment of the mystery of the Ascension.* All the mysteries being now accomplished, the Lord Jesus Christ embraces His mother, and bids her adieu, and she presses Him tenderly in her arms. The apostles, Mary Magdalen and all the others, fall down prostrate before Him, and with tears in their eyes, they respectfully kiss His Divine feet. He commands His apostles to rise and embraces them; then He began to ascend by His own power. . . . At this sight the

whole assembly prostrated themselves again. Our Lady said: "My blessed Son, remember me." She wept, yet her heart was full of joy, for her Son was ascending to heaven. His glory was so admirable! The apostles and the disciples exclaimed: "Lord, we have left all things for the love of Thee, remember us." Jesus with hands uplifted, with a radiant countenance, wearing the crown and apparel of a king, ascended in triumph toward heaven; and He blessed them and said: "Have courage, persevere to the end, for I will always be with you." And as He ascended, there followed Him that multitude of elect to whom He opened the way according to the prophecy of Micheas: "For He shall go up, that shall open the way before them."—(Mich. ii: 13.) In this manner did the Lord precede them clothed in white garments, His face being resplendent with beauty and delight. They, being replenished with joy, sang as they followed Him: "*Sing ye to God, make a way for Him who ascendeth upon the west. The Lord is His name.—Let the mercies of the Lord give glory to Him, and His wonderful works to the children of men.—Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, who savest those who hope in Thee, bringing forth Thy people in joy, and Thy elect in gladness.—Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, and Thy glory above the earth, that Thy beloved one may be made free.—We shall enter into Thy house, and in the presence of Thy angels we shall sing to Thee.*" —*Glory, praise and honor, to Thee, Christ our Redemptor.*—"*Sing to God, ye kingdoms of the earth, sing ye to the Lord.*" The choirs of the heavenly spirits, each one in the order of their hierarchy, come down from heaven and meet Jesus Christ. They humble themselves before Him who is their sovereign Lord; they accompany Him to heaven repeating admirable hymns and canticles. Now the patriarchs, who followed Jesus, said as they sang: "*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. Thou art worthy, O Lord, of all praise and honor, alleluia! For Thou hast overcome with glory, alleluia.—Let the heavens give glory to Thy wonderful works, alleluia, and to Thy virtue, alleluia.—Behold the tribes of the Lord now ascend, alleluia, to glorify Thee, and to say alleluia; that we may rejoice in the joy of Thy nation, that Thou mightest be praised with Thy inheritance.*"

Thus was accomplished the oracle of the prophet, who said: "*God is ascended with jubilee, and the Lord with the sound of trumpet.*" The Lord Jesus ascends slowly toward heaven, for the consolation of His

mother and of His disciples, till at last a cloud receives Him out of their sight, and the next moment He is with the angels and the patriarchs in the heavenly abode.

And now His holy mother, the holy apostles and disciples, could not see Him, yet they remained on their knees, looking up to heaven. Soon, however, they were favored with another apparition, which must have added much to their interior joy. Two angels in the shape of men, dressed in white, stood by them who also said : " *Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven ? This Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven.*"—(Acts. 1.) Consider the thoughtfulness of Jesus Christ toward His own. They are hardly deprived of the presence of their Master, when He sends two angels to comfort them. When the angels had spoken, our Lady requested them to recommend her to her Son, and they bowing down to the ground in her presence, cheerfully accepted her message. The apostles, Magdalen and the others addressed to them the same request. After the departure of the angels, they returned to the city. They entered a house on the mount of Sion, and following the command of the Lord, they remained there expecting the coming of the Holy Ghost.

And I also, O Jesus, my Divine king, being full of joy and of hope, rejoicing on account of Thy glory, I obey Thee and go whither Thy will calleth me. From this moment I raise myself above the things of earth; I wish all my thoughts and affections to be raised to heaven, " where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God."—(Col. iii : 1.) I devote myself to labor and to sufferings, which are in this world the share of Thy ministers, as they were Thine also. I will wait with patience for the happiness Thou reservest for them at the end of time, in Thy triumphant and last ascension.

1st Point. *Last preparations for the Ascension.*—The fortieth day having come, Jesus appears to His disciples assembled in the cenacle, eats with them, and announces to them that He is about to ascend into heaven. What impression does this news of His departure make upon them, but especially upon His mother? He consoles them and bids them go up the mount of Olives, where He again appears to them.

2d Point. *Accomplishment of the mystery.* Jesus bids farewell to His mother. All the disciples prostrate themselves, and burst into tears. . . . Then He begins to ascend by His own power. . . . What were the last words of Mary and of the disciples, to Jesus? Whilst blessing them He was rising in triumph toward heaven. All the orders of blessed spirits come to meet Him and accompany Him, making the air to rejoice with their canticles. A cloud received Him out of their sight, and still their eyes look up to heaven. Two angels come and put an end to their ecstasy, then only do they go down from the mountain and return to Jerusalem. And I also, O my King, I devote myself to labor and to sufferings. They are for us, as they were for Thee, the only way that leadeth up to heaven.

LXVI. MEDITATION.

THE ASCENSION A SUBJECT OF JOY FOR THE GOOD PRIEST.

1st.—TRIUMPH OF JESUS CHRIST IN HIS ASCENSION.

2d.—THE SACERDOTAL MINISTRY GLORIFIED IN HIS ASCENSION.

3d.—GLORY WHICH IT PROMISES A GOOD PRIEST.

1st Point. *The Savior glorified in His ascension.* St. Luke closes the relation of this mystery by the following words, which are also the last of his Gospel: "*They, adoring, went back into Jerusalem with great joy.*" "*Gaudebant apostoli propter Domini sui glorificationem, propter diaboli humiliationem, propter judœrum coufusionem, propter generis humani factam redemptionem, propter angelicæ ruinæ reparationem.*" —(Hugo. Card.)

The apostles had never known their Master so well as from the day of His resurrection. Many new traits, not only of His power and of His greatness, but especially of His goodness, and of His affection for them, had been revealed to them through His Divine apparitions and all the circumstances of His ascension. Their joy was proportionate to their love; the happiness of Jesus Christ was their own. They had,

however, seen only a small part of His glory, for the cloud had concealed from their view the heavenly part of His triumph. What they had seen, however, opened a vast field for their meditation. "The Lord," says St. Bonaventure, "followed by the blessed and magnificent escort which accompanied Him, opens the gates of heaven hitherto closed against human kind, enters triumphantly, and bending His knees before His Father, returns thanks to Him for the victory which He enabled Him to gain over hell, and presents to Him the captives whose chains He had broken; and adds immediately; I promised My brethren whom I left on earth to send them the Holy Ghost. I beg of Thee, Father, fulfill My promise; to Thee I recommend them. Then the Father rising, commands His beloved Son to sit at His right hand, who so nobly accomplished His great designs, and gained so much glory for Him. He says to Him that He has given Him all power and judgment; that He may dispose at His will of all things, and of the mission of the Holy Ghost."

The pious doctor represents afterward to himself the holy patriarchs, the prophets, all the just introduced into the eternal kingdom, and each of the nine choirs of angels, coming in succession to clebrate the praise of the Divine King, and to offer Him their homages. *Omnes exultant, omnes lætantur, omnes cantant, omnes gaudent, omnes jubilant, omnes manibus plaudunt, omnes chorizant, omnes jucundantur, omnes tripudiant.* Then truly the canticle of joy resounded throughout the heavenly Jerusalem, and the *alleluia* was sung in all its streets. Never was there in heaven such a feast as this from the foundation of the world; neither shall there ever be one like it, except perhaps on the day of judgment, when the elect will enter heaven with their glorified bodies; and this is, says again St. Bonaventure, which distinguishes the Ascension from the most part of the other mysteries. The incarnation of the Son of God, His nativity, His passion, are undoubtedly very great feasts. For us, however, not for Him; for He, in those mysteries found nothing but humiliations, poverty, sufferings. . . . His resurrection is a greater feast, both for Him and for us, for in this feast He triumphed over death, and brought about our justification; but notwithstanding this triumph, He had not yet sat at the right hand of His Father, on the throne of His glory, and the heavens had not yet been opened to receive us, notwithstanding our justification. . . . But

these things were accomplished on the day of His ascension. . . . . If not for this mystery, the Redeemer's glory would have remained imperfect. The soul which sincerely loves Jesus Christ should, therefore, rejoice more on this day than on any other day in the year. Whence the good Master said to His disciples: "*If you love Me you would indeed rejoice, because I go to the Father.*" There is, however, in this ascension, a special subject of joy for priests.

2d Point. *The priesthood glorified in the mystery of the Ascension.* St. Paul unites the Ascension of Jesus Christ with the dignity of his priesthood. . . . "*The forerunner, Jesus, is entered for us, made a high priest forever, according to the order Melchisedeck.*"—(Heb. vi : 20.) He has entered heaven to reign there at the right hand of His Father, and to accomplish there, eternally in our behalf, the duties of mediator and pontiff. "*He is the mediator of the New Testament . . . that they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*"—(Ib. ix : 15.) "*Whereby He is also able to save forever them that come to God by Him, always living to make intercession for us.*"—(Ib. vii : 25.) O priest of God, you are the minister of this great King. "*Let man so look upon us as upon the ministers of Christ.*"—(I. Cor. iv : 1.) You are the vicar of this Divine pontiff. The Council of Trent gives you this glorious title: "*Dominus noster Jesus Christus, e terris ascensurus ad cœlos, sacerdotes sui ipsius vicarios reliquit.*"—(Sess. 14, c. 5.) You exercise on earth the same priesthood. Through you and with you, He adores, He prays, He sacrifices Himself, He negotiates the peace and salvation of the whole world. How distinguished the favors you enjoy in consequence of this august ministry. Jesus places you here on earth as His vicegerent. "*He who heareth you, heareth Me.*" He confides to you the care of His glory, the treasures of His grace, leaving to you the honor of distributing them to His people. You wield His power. "*You open and no one shutteth; you shut and no one opens.*"—(Ap. iii.) "*Whatever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound also in heaven, and whatever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven.*" He who raised Himself up to the highest place of heaven, descends every day into your very hands. He permits you to touch Him, to receive Him for your nourishment, to give Him. . . . And what shall we say of the reward He destines for you? "If any one will minister to Me, My Father will glorify him."

3d Point. *Glory which the mystery of the Ascension promises to the good priest.* The priestly ministry is a continual immolation to oneself, an acceptance of all kinds of sorrows, for the cause of God and that of souls. To nature there is nothing so repugnant, but blessed is the end of this ministry. For the theater of His triumph, Jesus chose the place which was that of His humiliations. The disciples beheld Him in His agony at the foot of the mountain of Olives: from the summit of that mountain they see Him rising up toward heaven. He wishes them to be deeply penetrated with the thought that there is no proportion between the afflictions of time and the joys of eternity.—(Rom. viii: 8.) Compare the sufferings of Jesus with His triumph. Behold, He is about to be acknowledged and proclaimed Master of the universe. *King immortal of ages.* . . . Rays of glory have concealed His wounds. . . . He receives glory for His humiliations, and torrents of delights are the reward of His tears. One ungrateful, rebellious nation had indeed dared to say: *We will not have this man to reign over us.* But now His Gospel will be preached in the whole world. The benefits of His redemption will be announced everywhere, and countless nations will submit to His yoke. In place of vain reproaches and meaningless outrages, He will now receive sincere homage and profound adoration. For one cross, thousands of altars; for one Calvary, thousands of temples are erected in His honor. But the mind of man is overpowered, it can find no proportion between the journey and the goal, when the question of duration is considered. . . . Some few hours, some few days, or for the most, some few years in sorrows and struggles, and then an eternity of rest, of joy and triumph.

The Ascension of Christ explains the intrepidity of the apostles. It enabled them to look calmly on the tortures prepared for them. This accounts for their ardent zeal in going to preach the Gospel. "But they preached everywhere," for, says St. Paul, they do not lose sight of the spectacle they had witnessed. "*Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who, having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame.*"—(H. xii: 2.) Here also, O my Lord, I wish to seek for comfort and strength. "*As the Lord liveth, I will not leave thee.*" I am very willing to suffer for Thee in this world, since for this price Thou deignest to promise to me life everlasting.

1st Point. *The Lord glorified in His ascension.* St. Bonaventure represents to us Jesus Christ entering into heaven, whose gates He throws wide open. Consider how He is received by His Father, whose designs He had so well accomplished. The other mysteries of our Lord, His incarnation, His nativity . . . are great feasts. They are replete with benefits for us, but not for Christ, since those mysteries brought Him only humiliations and suffering. His resurrection itself had not yet placed Him on the throne of His glory in heaven. His ascension completes the stupendous work of the redemption. This, therefore, is the most joyful day for a soul which sincerely loves Jesus Christ.

2d Point. *The priesthood glorified in the mystery of the Ascension.* St. Paul unites the Ascension of Jesus Christ with the dignity of his priesthood. He entered into heaven to fulfill there eternally, in our behalf, the functions of pontiff. O priest of God, you are the vicar of this pontiff! Through you and with you, He adores, prays, sacrifices Himself. . . . To you He confides the interests of His glory. . . . Think of the reward He has in store for you.

3d Point. *Glory which the mystery of the Ascension promises to a good priest.* The Savior chooses for the theater of His triumph, the very spot which was that of His humiliations. He wishes us to be thoroughly imbued with the thought that there is no proportion between the affliction of time and the joys of eternity. Let us contemplate our head. Contrast His glory with His humiliations. How many temples for one Calvary! Hence the apostles never failed in courage since the ascension of their Divine Master. With the remembrance of this event, and with my love for Thee, O my Jesus, I will henceforth seek for comfort and for strength.

LXVII. MEDITATION.

Thursday before

PENTECOST—A GOOD PRIEST PREPARES HIMSELF FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THIS FEAST, BY ARDENTLY DESIRING TO RECEIVE THE HOLY GHOST.

Faith, which reveals to us the mystery of the Divine nature, seems to discover to us nothing else in it than the mystery of God's love for man, since it manifests to us the three persons of the blessed Trinity, devoting special attention to the attainment of the happiness of man. For us the Father created all things by His power, and preserves and directs everything by His Providence; for us the Son is Savior, and the spirit of God accomplishes the work of our salvation through the graces of sanctification which He lavishes upon us. It is just, therefore, that we should render each of the Divine persons particular homage for the blessings we receive from them. The season of Pentecost is destined to the discharge of this obligation toward the Holy Ghost. It is He who suggests to the Church the pious devotions which she encourages or commands! Do we sufficiently esteem and practice the devotion which has for its object to honor directly the third person of the blessed Trinity?

A good priest observes the recommendation of Jesus Christ to the apostles when He left them. "*He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father.*" . . .—(Act: i: 4.) From Ascension day till Whit Sunday, he does not go out of Jesusalem; he remains as closely as possible in the sanctuary of His soul, ever waiting for the promise. He frequently addresses to Him fervent aspirations: *Veni, Creator Spiritus, mentes tuorum visita.* Those ardent desires are excited by the following motives:—

1st.—GREATNESS OF THE BLESSINGS WHICH HE EXPECTS FROM THIS VISIT.

2d.—CERTAIN HOPE OF OBTAINING THEM, IF HE PREPARES HIMSELF PROPERLY.

3d.—HIS DEEP CONVICTION OF THEIR NEED.

1st Point. *Great blessings which the Holy Ghost imparts to the souls which He visits.* Pentecost, says Bourdalone, is not like the other festivals, a mere commemoration of a mystery, which was accomplished once for all; it is for us, when we are prepared, the renewed accomplishment of this mystery. "The same Spirit Who came down visibly upon the apostles, comes down now, really upon us, not with the same display and prodigies, but with the same effects of conversion and sanctification." He purifies, enlightens us, and fills us with the fire of sacred love. He enables us to realize all the designs of the Lord's mercy, for our salvation, and that of our brethren. He is pre-eminently the *donum Dei.* It is true that God has given us His Son, and with Him all His benefits. It is the Spirit of God, however, that gives us the grace of knowing this inestimable gift, and gives Him up, as it were, to us, through faith, hope and charity, of which He is the principle in our souls. He applies His merits to us, unites us to Him as His members, infuses into us His life, and thereby fixes the seal to the full accomplishment of our salvation.

I represent to myself this adorable spirit in the soul of a just man as a spring of life, which through its seven admirable channels irrigates all its faculties, and makes it bear fruits of the most excellent virtues. They are the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. These are very precious, particularly for a priest and a pastor. St. Peter characterizes them by saying: He has given us most great and precious promises. He calls them promises because they are the grand object of Divine promises, and also because they are the pledge of the glory promised to us. He calls them most great and precious, and for this appellation He gives a convincing motive, by affirming that they make us participate in the Divine nature, "*that by these you might be made partakers of the Divine nature.*"—(II Pet i: 4.)

They are a filial fear which renders the soul timorous in matters of unfaithfulness, and inspires it with sovereign respect for the Divine majesty.--Through the gift of piety, we find spiritual joy in all the exercises which concern the honor and the service of God ; in meditation, the singing of psalms.—Fortitude raises our minds above all the goods and evils of the present life, and enables us to perform the most heroic actions. Such are the three gifts which perfect the will ; the four others which act immediately on the intellect, may be compared, says a pious author (Nouet), to four tongues of fire, which the Holy Ghost uses to instruct and direct us.—At times He speaks to us as a friend who counsels a friend in difficult circumstances, pointing out to the way to overcome them ; at times as a master, teaching us the most noble of all sciences, the science of the saints, by which we judge rightly of all things, bestowing upon them the exact degree of esteem or contempt which is due to them. By the light of this lamp we clearly perceive the nothingness of all that passes ; they see in poverty the price of an eternal kingdom, in bodily sickness the health of the soul, in death itself, as it were, a birth or entrance to immortal life.—The gift of wisdom preserves us from the direful folly of sinners in matters concerning salvation ; it withdraws our affections from creatures and fixes them on God ; it lifts up our hearts from earth to heaven. "*Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth.*"—(Col. iii: 2.)

The gift of intelligence enables to comprehend the mysteries of faith and enlightens us with a light so vivid, that our faith pierces the cloud, so that we are enabled to see what we believe. It dispels all obscurity from those pratical virtues repugnant to nature, abnegation, love of the cross ; it aids us to understand how happiness may be found in sufferings, honor in contempt, and how the saints are the only persons who properly understood the love of oneself. O priest of God, you have received the Holy Ghost, but do you possess Him with the abundance of His gifts? If for too long a time, through your own fault you received but a small measure of them, why do you now delay? Why do you not make the attainment of so great a good the sole object of your ambition? If you seek it sincerely, you will certainly find it in the approaching solemnities.

2d Point. *Our hope of obtaining the visit of the Holy Ghost, is certain.* This hope is grounded upon the very nature of the Holy Ghost, upon unquestionable claims, upon the most positive promises.

That which is good, says St. Thomas, seeks to spread and communicate itself: *Bonum dicitur diffusivum sui.* Now the Holy Ghost is goodness itself. He is in a manner the heart of God, *cujus natura bonitas.* Through Him the Father and the Son love one another, and love us also. To Him are attributed the works of charity. Far from being sparing of His treasures, He ceases not to offer them; His delight is to lavish them upon us. Why does He knock at the door of our hearts? He desires most ardently to enter them. "*If any man shall hear My voice and open to Me the door, I will come into him and will sup with him and he with me.*"—(Ap. iii: 20.) It might be said that He begs of us to pray to Him, for from Him we receive the suggestion and the will to offer to Him our requests. He does more still. He Himself prays in us and for us.—(Rom. viii: 26.) How could He reject prayers which He Himself suggests and inspires?

When, moreover, we ask for the visit of the Holy Ghost, we claim a good which is ours. It was acquired for us by the labors, the sufferings and the death of the Son of God; our claims are certain, but besides we have promises which cannot deceive. It will suffice to quote the following: "*If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good spirit to them that ask Him?*"—(L. xi: 13.) Wherefore, the good priest expects with confidence, but at the same time continues more ardently to solicit the coming of the Holy Ghost within him. *Veni creator Spiritus, mentes tuorum visita.*

3d Point. *He is deeply convinced that he needs the graces of the Holy Ghost*, as much for himself as for his work. He knows the poverty of his nature, which of itself is prone to ignorance and sin. He knows that of himself he can do absolutely nothing in the order of salvation. "*No man can say the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost.*"—(I. Cor. xii: 3.) He, therefore, longs to be endowed with that virtue from above which alone is able to lend effective aid to extreme weakness. "*The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity.*"—(R. viii: 26.) The weakness of our intellect, which is so little apt to understand eternal truth; the weakness of our will, so little inclined to virtue; the weak-

ness of our memory, which so easily forgets God ; our weakness, our incapacity for action, for suffering, for prayer, for we know neither what to ask, nor how to ask it.

But if every faithful soul needs to receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost :—*Reple tuorum corda fidelium.*—He ought to receive them with greater abundance on whom the obligations of the priesthood have been imposed. Of the office of the priest, St. Ambrose said : *Munus Spiritus, Sancti, officium sacerdotis.*—(De Pœnit. l. i, c. 2) Every priest ought to be *paraclete* according to the three meanings of this word, a man who intercedes, who exhorts, who keeps up courage, or revives it when lost. The priest with the Gospel which he preaches, the sacraments which he administers, and the graces annexed to his prayer, is the instrument which the Holy Ghost uses for His operations in the Church. Through the Holy Ghost the priest is the light of the world and the salt of the earth ; through Him, especially, is the priest a consoler. "*The spirit of the Lord is upon me . . . to comfort all that mourn.*"—(Is. lxi : 1, 2.) "*Who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we also may be able to comfort them who are in any distress.*"—(II. Cor. 1 : 4.) Excite and entertain within you an ardent desire to receive the plentitude of the graces of the Holy Ghost. In no other way can you better dispose yourself for the festival of Pentecost. *Sitit sitiri,* says St. Gregory Nazianzen ; behold the heart of God. . . . Infinite as He is, we can put Him under obligation to us. How so? By asking Him to oblige us, because He is more willing to give than others are to receive.—(Bossuet.

1st Point. *Greatness of the blessings which the visit of the Holy Ghost brings to us.* For souls well prepared this feast is the renewed accomplishment of the mysteries of Pentecost. The Holy Ghost is pre-eminently the gift of God. He applies to us the merits of Jesus Christ, unites us to Him as His members, communicates to us His life. He is, as it were, a Divine spring, which spreads itself over souls through seven admirable channels, which are His gifts. Three of these perfect our will, and they are fear, piety, and fortitude ; the four others, counsel, knowledge, wisdom and intelligence, act immediately upon the intellect.

2d Point. *Certain hope of receiving the visit of the Holy Ghost.* It is grounded upon the very nature of the Holy Ghost, upon the most unquestionable claims, and the most infallible promises.—That which is good seeks to communicate itself: now the Holy Ghost is goodness itself; He is, as it were, the heart of God.—When we ask for His coming, we claim something which is ours; it was acquired for us through the death of Jesus Christ.—We have, moreover, promises which cannot fail.

3d Point. *We have much need of the graces of the Holy Ghost.* Of ourselves we can do absolutely nothing in the order of salvation. The Holy Ghost alone can efficaciously aid our weakness. . . . Let us ask. God thirsts after our salvation; we place Him under obligation, by praying to Him to oblige us.

LXVIII. MEDITATION.

CONDUCT OF A GOOD PRIEST ON THE DAYS WHICH PRECEDE PENTECOST.

1st.—HE REMOVES THE OBSTACLES TO THE VISIT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

2d.—HE USES THE PROPER MEANS TO ATTRACT THE HOLY GHOST.

1st Point. *He removes the obstacles to the visit of the Holy Ghost.* Sin, the spirit of the world, sentiments sensual or too human.

I. Sin is the great enemy of the Holy Ghost. It grieves Him and obliges Him to withdraw His light from us; it weakens, or destroys the charity which that spirit had poured into our hearts; it is contrary to all His designs. Our first care, therefore, in these days of preparation, should be to strive against sin, the stain of which cannot be reconciled with the purity of Him Who is, in a manner, the personification of holiness. Our hearts are vessels destined to receive the precious water of His grace. Let us begin by purifying them: "*Vas es, sed adhuc plenus es . . . funde, ut implearis; bono implendus es, funde malum. Putas quia melle vult te Deus implere, si aceto plenus es?*"—(St. August. in Ps. 10.) The contrition which He inspires, is as the first step of the

Holy Ghost toward us, to prepare us for His visit. We grieved Him by our ingratitude. He grieves us with a wholesome remorse. He opens the eyes of a soul which did not perceive its infidelities, or used to consider them as a matter of little account. He reminds this priest, His minister and His friend, of a whole life full of negligence, if not of crime. He asks of him if he ought not to grieve bitterly for the faults which he continued to commit, after so many pardons already granted him? He thus excites him to purify his soul with tears of contrition: *Cum a Spiritu Sancto mens visitatur, statim peccata sua plorat.*

II. The spirit of the world is another obstacle to the presence and reign of the Holy Ghost. "*What fellowship hath light with darkness.*"—(II. Cor. vi.) Wherefore Jesus Christ praying to His Father to send the Holy Ghost to His disciples, to sanctify them in truth (J. xvii: 17), represents that they are not of the world, as He is not of the world (J. xiv: 19); that He chose them out of the world (J. xv); that He prays not for the world, which is incapable of receiving this spirit of truth because it seeth Him not.—(J. xiv: 17.) The appreciation of the world, and that of the Holy Ghost, is diametrically opposed; the same, says St. Bernard, is true of the sentiments which they inspire: "*Valde sibi adversantur amor mundi et amor Dei.*" O priest of God, forget not that your character demands of you to struggle against and to destroy the spirit of the world. What a disorder if you, in any manner, participated in its false estimates concerning poverty, riches, honor and contempt! . . . What a scandal, if your words gave the world to understand that you love what it loves, that you esteem what it esteems. During this week carefully examine your thoughts and your affections, to know whether it be the spirit of truth or the spirit of the world which guides you.

III. At the sight of a corrupted world, God pronounced this irrevocable decree: that His spirit would not remain in man because he is flesh. The flesh and the spirit are two powers which are ever at war. "*The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.*"—(Gal. v: 17.) If we permit the flesh to govern, we are dead; all of supernatural and Divine life has left us. "*But if, by the spirit, you mortify the works of the flesh, you shall live.*"—(Rom. viii: 13.) The following words of the Savior show how far disengagement from all human affections should extend in apostolic men: "*If I go not the paraclete shall not come to*

you." A strange declaration of the Son of God: *Nisi abstulero vobis carnem, non habebitis Spiritum!* What then, O Holy Spirit? Can it be that this adorable flesh formed by Thyself with the most pure blood of Mary, should be disagreeable to Thy eyes, and prevent Thee from pouring the abundance of Thy gifts into souls otherwise so well prepared? Jesus, however, wishes to teach us that these men destined to sanctify the world, were to be deprived of His sensible presence, and of the human joy which that presence afforded them, before being fit to receive the plentitude of the graces of the Holy Ghost: *Nisi carnis præsentia vestris subtrahatur affectibus, spiritualis gratiæ plenitudinem mens occupata non admittet.* How, then, could a sensual man, ever seeking self-indulgence, flatter himself to receive His visits and His consolations! "*Audeat ergo qui carnem rapitqui carnem fovet, illam, consolationem supernæ visitationis expectare!*"—(St. Ber. serm. de Asc.) I know the obstacles to the reception of the blessings which I desire; with the help of Thy grace, O my God, I resolve to free myself from them.

2d Point. *Take the proper means to attract the Holy Ghost to you.* These we find mentioned in the last words of the Savior to His disciples when He was about to ascend to heaven; and in their faithful obedience to His precepts, He had said to them: "Stay you in the city till you be endued with virtue from above." This was to recommend to them three points: To stay in Jerusalem, in the city: to stay there with a calm, quiet mind, stay, *sedete;* to perseverance in their expectation "till you be endued with virtue."

The apostles obey. "Leaving the mount of Olives, they return into the city, enter the cenacle, and here *they were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus.*"—(Acts i: 14.) Behold them sequestered from the world, living in a dwelling which, for them, was full of solemn and holy recollections. In this assembly there exisits the most perfect union, and peace is the consequence of this union. They all pray with the same intention, they all pray with equal ardor. Eight, nine days have passed away, and they have not yet seen the accomplishment of the promises of Jesus Christ, but their constancy is not shaken; they continue to pray. . . . These were proper dispositions for the reception of Holy Ghost: "*Descendit Spiritus super unanimes, sedentes atque orantes; diligit hic Spiritus unitatem, amat*

pacem, diligit concordiam."—(St. Laur. Just. in Pent.) Mary was the bond of this union, the soul of this prayer. Ah, how powerful were her orison and sighs to engage her holy spouse to come down and to fill with His graces, those who were soon to become His organs for the conversion of the universe : "*Per Mariæ suspiria et orationes Spiritu Sancto repleti sunt apostoli.*"—(Dyon. Carth. de Laud., B. v, l. iv.)

I must now lay down for myself a line of conduct as a preparation for the visit of the Holy Ghost. This should be, as far as possible, a week of recollection and solitude : "*Si præparas aurem interiorem, fuge curam exteriorem.*"—(St. Ber.) A life of penance and of humble repentance, so that my unworthiness may not be an obstacle to a visit so much needed ; I should live in union and charity with my fellow-beings, banishing from my heart all leaven of bitterness which I may find there, and endeavoring to prepare souls confided to my care for the same blessings which I expect myself ; my life this week should be a life of recollection and fervent prayer, according to the counsel of a pious interpreter of Scriptures : "*Si ad illam internam et supernam dulcedinem inhias, si ad Spiritus veritatem suspiras, audi quid tibi divinitus præcipiatur : Dilata os tuum, et implebo illud.*"—(Rich. Vict.)

Represent to yourself Jesus in the midst of the Jews, standing and crying out : "*If any man thirst let him come to Me and drink.*"—(J. vii : 33.) He had said in another circumstance : "*The water which I will give him, shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting.*"—(J. iv : 14.) Pray to God through the mediation of Mary, and let your confidence be unbounded ; her intercession never fails, and is particularly assured in our case, when we ask for the gifts of the Holy Ghost, for it was to obtain them for us that she was made His spouse and given to us as a mother.

1st Point. *Remove the obstacles to the visit of the Holy Ghost.* Sin, the spirit of the world, affections too human. Our souls are the vessels destined to receive the precious water of grace ; let us begin by purifying them. We have grieved the Holy Ghost. He grieves us by remorse, desiring to pardon us. The spirit of the world is entirely opposed to the Holy Ghost. Let us struggle against concupiscence of the flesh ; if we suffer it to master us, we shall die ; if we master it by

works of the spirit, we will live. The apostles themselves needed to be deprived of the presence of Jesus Christ Whom they loved with an affection too human.

2d Point. *Take the proper means to draw the Holy Ghost into your soul.* Withdraw from the world, abide in peace, persevere in hope and in prayer. Be recollected, contrite for your sins, perfectly united with your fellow-beings ; implore and confide in the mediation of Mary.

LXIX. MEDITATION.

PENTECOST—CONTEMPLATION.

1st.—CONTEMPLATE THE PERSONS MENTIONED.

2d.—HEAR WHAT THEY SAY.

3d.—CONSIDER WHAT THEY DO.

FIRST PRELUDE.—" *When the days of Pentecost were accomplished, they were all together in the same place; and suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were, of fire, and it sat upon every one of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost; and they began to speak with diverse tongues. . . . And when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and they were confounded in mind. . . . Some were amazed and wondered. . . . but others mocking, said: " These men are full of new wine" . . . . Peter spoke, and at this first discourse three thousand persons were converted.*—(Acts ii.)

SECOND PRELUDE.—Represent to yourself the city of Jerusalem ; imagine you see the cenacle on Mount Sion.

THIRD PRELUDE.—Ask of the Holy Ghost to grant you the grace which the Church will ask Him with so much devotion during this week : *Veni, Sancte Spiritus—Accende lumen sensibus, infunde amorem cordibus.*

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons concerned.* Behold the apostles in the cenacle an instant before the accomplishment of the mystery. Their countenances are aglow ; they pray with great fervor, sometimes kneeling, sometimes standing, or sitting in silent meditation, or with their eyes and hands lifted up toward heaven. . . . They do not yet know from experience the great benefit they expect ; they, however, desire ardently the Holy Spirit, for they know that He is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jesus their good Master, who comes to take His place with them, and compensate them amply for the privation of His visible presence. . . . Behold Mary absorbed in profound recollection ; ask with her what she is asking for you. . . . See with eyes of faith the angels who hover around this holy place, and carry joyfully to the throne of God so many pure and fervent prayers. Are your own prayers worthy to be united with theirs? In heaven, contemplate one God in three Divine persons attentive to prayers which are agreeable to Him, and always ready to listen to new supplications. In the city contemplate the multitude of inhabitants, and of the strangers gathered together for the festivities, having come to adore the Lord in His temple. Is it merely a sense of religion or duty that has drawn this crowd to Jerusalem? All here seem to be swayed by passion or frivolity; it is a striking contrast with the quietness and pious exercises of the cenacle. Yet amongst so many so little thoughtful of eternal interests, God discerns upright hearts, which will soon be lighted up with light from on high, and will receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost. He sees some whose fidelity to a first grace will promptly raise to eminent holiness ; for out of this multitude, agitated as an angry sea, will arise that Church of Jerusalem, which will be forever the model of all churches. Wonderful indeed will be the creation which the Spirit of God will soon operate ! *Veni, Creator Spiritus.*

2d and 3d Points. *Consider the actions, hear the words.* "*Suddenly there comes a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house.*" A globe of fire appears which is divided in the form of fiery tongues, which rested upon every one present in the cenacle. Consider their emotions and feelings at this moment, the sudden illumination, the holy, delightful exultation ! Heavenly hearts take now the place of hearts hitherto so heavy, so slow to believe and

to love! In the narrative, however, of this mystery, each word should be considered.

There comes a sound. All are awed by this great noise. Those inclined to somnolency, if such were there, are wakened up. God wishes us to be attentive to the operations of His grace. *Suddenly.* The visit of the Holy Ghost has no fixed hour; He breathes wherever and whenever He wishes; as you should always desire Him, you should always expect Him. . . . Unhappy is the soul which is not recollected when He comes to honor it with His presence, and enrich it with His treasures. *From heaven.* We can expect but little from earth; it is from heaven that every good gift and every perfect gift come to us.—(Jam. i: 17.) *As of a wind.* You may here consider the properties of the wind as far as they symbolize the Holy Ghost; its sudden rush, its invisibility, swiftness, the change it operates in the atmosphere. . . . *Mighty wind.* When a soul is carried away by passions, or when it is simply tepid and sensual, how strongly it has to be shaken before it can rise. *It filled the whole house where they were sitting.* This house is the Church, which feels everywhere the presence of the Holy Ghost. . . . It is your own soul. He will fill it all, if you open it to His inspirations. . . . but He wishes to find you in a state of calmness. *Sitting.* The apostles receive that which had been promised to them, because they faithfully observed the commands of Christ. . . . *Stay you in the city.*

The Holy Ghost manifests Himself still by another symbol: *There appeared to them parted tongues, as it were, of fire.* Fire, which of all the elements is the most noble, has power to illuminate, to warm and to purify. The Holy Ghost does act like fire; as spirit of truth, He illuminates us; as spirit of holiness, He purifies us; as spirit of fortitude, He animates us, strengthens our faculties, replenishes us with zeal. . . . The fiery tongues express the marvellous effects which the Holy Spirit will work out by the teaching of the apostles and that of their associates in the Evangelical ministry. These effects appeared at once. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak." As soon as these men, hitherto so timid, have received the Holy Ghost, they open the doors of the cenacle which they had kept carefully closed; they appear in the temple, on public squares, and preach Jesus Christ in the midst of the very nation which had so cruelly crucified Him. . . . In an instant, the event of the cenacle is the

event of the whole city. A large crowd has gathered together. "It is confounded in mind, because that every man heard them speak in his own tongue." The amazement is general. "Behold are they not all these that speak Galileans? and how have we heard, every man our own tongue wherein we were born?" What can this be? There were also there light-minded people inclined to mock. "*But others mocking, said, these men are full of new wine.*"

Hear now with particular attention, the sermon of St. Peter. Whence came to him this knowledge, this bold, captivating eloquence: "*Ye men of Israel, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you as you also know. . . . you, by the hands of wicked men, have crucified and slain. . . . Whom God has raised up. . . . Whereof all we are witnesses.*" And all that did happen, and all that happens to-day is but the exact accomplishment of the prophecies. "*Therefore, let all the house of Israel know most certainly, that God hath made both Lord and Christ, this same Jesus whom you have crucified.*" This inspired language excites within many souls a wholesome compunction; they exclaim: "*What shall we do, men and brethren. But Peter said to them: Do penance and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*" They were docile to this word, and to the grace which accompanied it, and three thousand were converted and received baptism.

Colloquy with the apostles and Mary, praying to them to intercede for you. Pray to the Holy Ghost Himself, using the second form of prayer of St. Ignatius; go slowly over the form of supplication: *Veni, sancte Spiritus, reple tuorum corda fidelium, et tui amoris in eis ignem accende.* Every day at Mass during this octave, the Church will bid you consider that prayer, and direct you to genuflect whilst reciting it.

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons.* In the cenacle a moment before the accomplishment of the mystery. The apostles, Mary, the angels. . . . In heaven the adorable Trinity, attentive to their prayers. In the city. What a contrast between the multitude and the assembly in the cenacle. Out of this multitude, however, the primitive Church

of Jerusalem will be formed, and it will remain forever the model o all the churches.

2d and 3d Points. *Hear the words, consider the actions.* Whence came that great sound, what are its effects? It came on a sudden. Unhappy is the soul which is not prepared when the Holy Ghost visits it It is a wind ; mighty. It fills the whole house. What house is this? There is fire. It gives light, purity and warmth ; it has the shape of tongues typifying the apostolic ministry. Marvellous change in those men hitherto so imperfect and timid. Sermon of St. Peter ; its success. Colloquy with the apostles, with Mary, with the Holy Ghost Himself.

LXX. MEDITATION.

WHIT MONDAY—THE CLERGY SANCTIFIED BY THE HOLY GHOST, AND THE WHOLE CHURCH, WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF THE CLERGY, SANCTIFIED BY THE SAME HOLY SPIRIT.

1st.—THE HOLY GHOST SANCTIFIED THE APOSTLES AND ALL APOSTOLIC MEN.

2d.—SANCTIFICATION OF THE CHURCH THROUGH THE APOSTLES AND APOSTOLIC MEN.

1st Point. *The Holy Ghost sanctifying the apostles and their successors.* When we consider what He did for the apostles on the day of Pentecost, we are liable to bestow all our attention on the abundance of wonderful graces which transformed them suddenly into so many vessels of election, and made them at once accomplished ministers of the Gospel. This is the miraculous side of the mystery. It is, however, more profitable to consider it in its practical aspect, by asking ourselves, what was the reason of a change so marvellous in them. It was undoubtedly their fidelity to correspond to all the graces offered them.

Sudden indeed as was the transformation of these men, who were destined themselves to transform the world, it had, nevertheless, its increase and progress. We see that the Holy Ghost prepares their hearts by common graces. The apostles make the best use of these graces, and they were followed by other extraordinary favors.

Stay in the city. Behold the inception of that grand work which excites so much admiration on this day. The apostles receive the grace of recollection, of isolation from the world. This is ordinary grace. The apostles, however, improve it to its full extent. Jesus had told them to stay in Jerusalem, and there they remain continuously. Their docility is rewarded by a more efficacious grace, which, however, is refused to no one, the grace of prayer. Their obedience to the spirit of prayer obtains for them the spirit of fervor and of zeal, figured by those tongues of fire which rested upon their heads. . . . This is indeed an extraordinary grace. It is the result of fidelity to preceding graces. Being now filled with the Holy Ghost, they no longer try to control the fire which burns within them. They speak, they publish aloud the wonderful works of God, the mission, the death, the resurrection of the Savior. . . . To holy words they unite good works. With almost incredible hardships they found the Church, and their fidelity to those ever-increasing graces obtains for them the crowning grace of all, namely the grace to suffer and die for Jesus Christ.

Because they obeyed Divine inspiration by staying ten days in retirement amid a noisy city, they became men of prayer ; because they had prayed well, they became zealous preachers, powerful in works and in words ; their constant zeal in propagating the love and knowledge of Jesus Christ deserved for them the honor of being martyred for Him ; and because they were on earth the first martyrs of the Church militant, they are now in heaven the illustrious chiefs of the Church triumphant. Thus is the character of saints formed, and thus the character of the holy priests is moulded on that of the apostles. Let us remember the lives of the St. Francis de Sales, the Xaviers, the Ligouri's.

Such is the ordinary action of the Holy Ghost in the sanctification of apostolic men. He proportions the bestowal of His grace upon its use. In the beginning, it is mere dew falling drop by drop ; but when received with gratitude and carefully preserved it becomes an abundant rain which

brings forth fruits of solid virtue and eminent perfection. In the beginning it is merely a zephyr which tries to reach the heart; but if the heart be properly prepared, it soon becomes a mighty wind which fills up its capacity. I, alas, clearly see the cause of the barrenness of grace within me. I have often celebrated the feast of Pentecost, and yet I am so little acquainted with the ways of the Holy Ghost! This would not be the case had I turned His gifts to advantage, and always followed His inspirations.

2d Point. *The Holy Ghost sanctifying the Church with the co-operation of the apostles and apostolic men.* It had been foretold that God would send His Spirit, that a second creation should be affected, and that the face of the earth should be renewed.--(Ps. ciii.) "*That that which was dry land should become a pool, and the thirsty lands springs of water.*"—(Is. xxxv : 7.) These prophecies began to be accomplished in a striking manner, on the day of Pentecost.

The words of fire which issue from their mouths, enlighten, inflame and change suddenly a great number of those blinded, hardened Jews . . . and as soon as they have professed the faith, they are scarcely recognizable; the transformation is complete. Selfishness, covetousness, all the vices have disappeared and are substituted by virtues hitherto unknown in the world. "*And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul; neither did any one say that aught of the things that he possessed was his own.*"—(Acts iv : 32.) From Jerusalem, wherein strangers from every nation had assembled, the voice of the apostles resounded through the world. "Their sound has gone forth into all the earth."—(Rom. x : 18.) *A die Pentecostes imbres charismatum, flumina benedictionum, omne desertum et universam aridam rigaverunt.*—(St. Leo, Ser. i. de Pent.)

There is nothing so worthy of admiration through all the ages of the Church, as this continuous action of the Spirit, sanctifying the lay people through the clergy, the flocks through the pastors, and sometimes whole nations through one priest replete with apostolic zeal. Consider what God accomplished through the Dominics, the Francis Xaviers, the Vincent Ferriers, the Anthonies of Padua! We now are the dispensers of His grace, the instruments which He uses to introduce truth into the minds, and charity into the hearts of people. We received Him in ordination, not so much for ourselves as for the sake of

the obligations imposed on us. To the waters of baptism He gives power to purify souls; to all our sacramental forms, virtue to operate what they signify. . . . We obtain His grace by prayer—we impart this grace to others in the administration of the sacraments. It is the Holy Ghost Who remits sins, Who instructs, admonishes, consoles, and is the origin of whatever good we accomplish in the discharge of our duties. Reflect how you respond to the desire He has to save and sanctify souls through your labors! Do you preach with the aid of His light? "According as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak." Do you receive your inspirations from the Holy Ghost and from Him alone? Since you have the honor of being associated with Him through the communication of His gifts, you should co-operate, with a great deal of charity and meekness, in this work of mercy. What a sad contrast to see the ministers of sovereign mercy acting harshly in the discharge of His duties; to hear the organ of the spirit which is sweeter than honey, speaking with bitterness! Ask yourself if you fervently invoke Him at the beginning of your principal actions, particularly at the beginning of your ministerial labors, under the full conviction that without Him you can do nothing. *Sine tuo numine.* Ask yourself if you give up your own ideas in order to be guided by the Spirit of God alone in imitation of His true servant. "*Whosoever are lead by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God.*"—(Rom. viii : 14.)

1st Point. *The Holy Ghost sanctifying the apostles.* The principle of the marvellous change which appeared in the apostles, was due to their fidelity to correspond to all graces. The first one they received was a grace of recollection. Stay in the city. They spent all their time in the cenacle. As a reward for this retirement they receive the gift of prayer, and through prayer they receive the spirit of fervor, of zeal, of constancy. . . . Such is the ordinary conduct of the Holy Ghost.

2d Point. *Operations of the Holy Ghost in the sanctification of the Church by means of the apostles.* It had been foretold that a second creation would take place; that the face of the earth would be renewed by the Holy Spirit. These prophecies are accomplished.

What did the apostles and their successors do? We are the appointed dispensers of the graces of the Holy Ghost. To the waters of baptism He gives power to purify the souls, to the sacramental forms He gives virtue to operate what they signify. . . . Let us ask ourselves if we respond to the desire He has of sanctifying souls through our labors.

LXXI. MEDITATION.

WHIT TUESDAY—CONSOLATIONS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Jesus Christ had often declared to the apostles that this present life would be for them full of sorrows and distress, that in exchange for the good they would do, they should expect from the world only annoyance and persecutions. He had announced to them an affliction soon to visit them, saying that He was about to leave them to return to His Father. Their hearts were full of sadness; to console them, He promised to them the Holy Spirit. With Him they should not be orphans. —(J. xiv: 18.) And their consolation would be so great that its possession would offset the sacrifice of the visible presence of their Master. The special office of the Holy Ghost is that of consoler.

1st.—THE HOLY GHOST OUR CONSOLER.

2d.—TO WHOM HE GIVES HIS CONSOLATION.

1st Point. *The Holy Ghost our consoler.* He consoles us through His gifts; the confidence which He inspires; His reprimands.

I. Not to speak of the gift of a good conscience which the Scripture compares to a continuous feast, and which is also a fruit of the Holy Ghost, this Holy Spirit gives us two other gifts which impart much consolation. Through the first He enlightens our minds regarding Jesus Christ; through the second He teaches us what we ourselves are in Jesus Christ. The Savior had said to the apostles: "*When the paraclete comes whom I will send you from the Father, the spirit of truth . . . . He shall give testimony of Me.*"—(J. xv: 26.) The descent of

the Holy Ghost was for them, as it were, a new revelation concerning Jesus Christ and His mysteries. If hitherto they had known Him in the flesh, they henceforth knew Him in a manner incomparably more perfect. "*If we have known Christ according to the flesh; but now we know Him so no longer.*"—(II. Cor. v: 16.) The same must be said in regard to us. There is a great distance between a common faith and the faith which has received the enlightenment of the Holy Ghost. When a soul by means of these gifts has gained the pre-eminent knowledge of the charity of Jesus Christ; when it measures, so to say, the breadth, and length and heighth and depth, of His love for us, she finds therein an inexhaustible source of consolations for every situation in which she may find Herself. The second testimony which the Holy Ghost gives us, is equally proper to cause our hearts to expand; and this is, that we are the children of God, and consequently His heirs, brothers of and co-heirs with Christ. "*For the spirit Himself gives testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God; and if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs of Christ.*"—(Rom. viii: 16, 17.) We have received the spirit of adoption; in Him it is that we cry out in our distress, and He Himself says within us: *My Father, my Father.*—(Gal. iv: 6.) We may indeed lose the inheritance of our heavenly Father; and this thought caused the saints to tremble. We can, however, also secure it for ourselves, because it has been acquired for us, and because we already possess a guarantee of it, which is the Holy Ghost Himself. "You were signed with the Holy Spirit of promise who is the pledge of our inheritance."—(Eph. i: 13, 14.) Wherefore, the soul which is careful to preserve this precious earnest, moderates her fears, or even banishes them entirely, through the charity of God which is in her: "Perfect charity casteth out fear."—(I. Joan. iv: 18.) She, therefore, rests in peace on the bosom of her Father.

II. The confidence of that soul is the cause of her happiness. The Holy Ghost to induce her to forget herself, makes known to her the corruption of her nature, and its peccability. He at the same time shows her so clearly the power of God, His fidelity to His promises, His goodness and tenderness for those who invoke and love Him, that her vivid faith gives a substance and reality to that which is as yet a mere hope. "Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for."—(Heb. xi: 1.) It is

an anticipated fruition. The heart delights in the consideration of truths whose knowledge satisfies her mind.

III. The Holy Ghost affords us consolation even by His very reprimands. "His mission in forming and sanctifying the Church, is to convince the world of sin, and of justice and of judgment."—(J. xvi : 8.) He continues this struggle in the faithful, but particularly in priests. He tries to extirpate the remnants of this spirit of the world, which is prolific of sin, injustice and lying. Now to be entirely free from it, we must have attained perfection. He, therefore, complains to us of our voluntary infidelities which offend His infinite holiness. "He will convince the world of sin." He complains of our pretended good works in which there are to be found so many defects, perhaps so many selfish motives. "Of justice," "all our justices as the rag of a menstruous woman."—(Is. lxiv : 6.) He complains of our false judgments. "Of judgment," instead of thinking as He does regarding many matters, we think as the world does ; in place of adhering to truth, our mind feeds upon vanity. All this prevents the Holy Spirit from establishing His reign within us, and of raising us to the perfection and happiness which has been destined for us. Are not His complaints and His reproaches, an evidence of His love for us? Would you prefer that He remain silent? This is the terrible chastisement He inflicts on those whom He is about to leave to themselves. O Holy Spirit, never inflict this punishment on me! "O Lord, be not Thou silent, O Lord, depart not from me."—(Ps. xxxiv : 22.) In these apparent rigors, I see and I bless Thy tenderness. "Thy rod and Thy staff, they have comforted me."—(Ps. xxii : 4.)

2d Point. *For whom are consolations of the Holy Ghost?* They alone are comforted who are in affliction. "*Blessed are they that weep, for they shall be comforted.*"—*Qui non gemit ut peregrinus, non gaudebit ut civis.* A soul which is satisfied with its exile, which looks for all its joys therein, and is constantly engaged in ridding itself of inconveniences, need not expect any favor from the heavenly wisdom. "It is not found in the land of them who live in delights."—(Job. xxviii : 13.) The consolations of the Holy Ghost, are ordinarily the reward of generosity which is ready to sacrifice everything for the glory of God. The apostles were beaten with rods for preaching Jesus Christ, and "*they went from the presence of the council rejoicing, that*

they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus."—(Acts. v : 41.) The first Christians by embracing the faith resigned themselves to sufferings and to death ; and St. Luke speaks only of the consolations with which they were filled. "Now the Church was filled with the consolation of the Holy Ghost."—(Acts. ix : 31.)

We may distinguish three visits of the Holy Ghost. Visits of compassion to cure us ; in these He strives against the blindness of our mind, and the hardness of our heart. —Visits of trials to purify us. "He shall purify the sons of Levi, and shall refine them as gold and as silver."—(Mal. iii : 3.) He desires to dwell within our souls ; but if He see them governed by mere human nature, sensuality, selfishness, He allows us to feel the weight of our miseries, to oblige us to have recourse to Him. —Visits of friendship and of affection which may unite us to God more intimately, and give us courage to suffer not only with patience, but with joy also. The two first of those visits prepare us for the third one. The more docility we have to the Holy Ghost, the better disposed we are to receive the abundance of His consolations. We are still, it is true, in possession of His gifts ; but we hold them bound up as it were, through our dissipation of mind, our irregular affections, our numerous infidelities. We resist, we grieve the Holy Ghost; of this He complains. How then could we expect Him to console us? Let us purify our hearts by vigilance and mortification ; fervor and charity will develop in us, and we will soon experience how sweet is the Lord.

1st Point. *How does the Holy Ghost console us?* By the gifts He gives us, the confidence He inspires, nay sometimes by reprimands. He gives us two gifts full of consolation, by giving us more knowledge of Jesus Christ, and of our relations to Him. The descent of the Holy Ghost was for the apostles another revelation of Jesus Christ. He moreover reveals to the Christian soul its relations to the Savior.—Great peace comes to our soul through the confidence He inspires, by revealing to us the power, the fidelity, the goodness of God.—The complaints and reprimands which He utters are another consoling evidence of His love.

2d Point. *For whom are the consolations of the Holy Ghost?* They alone are consoled who are afflicted. "Blessed are they that weep." The first Christians in embracing the faith resigned themselves to sufferings, and they were filled with consolations. Let us not resist the Holy Ghost, let us purify our hearts and overcome ourselves, and we will soon experience how sweet is the Lord.

MEDITATIONS ON THE VARIOUS MYSTERIES, THE DIFFERENT SEASONS AND FEASTS OF THE LITURGICAL YEAR.

PROPER OF THE SAINTS.

LXXII. MEDITATION.

FEBRUARY 2d—PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(See Page 66.)

LXXIII. MEDITATION.

FEBRUARY 10th—SAINT SCHOLASTICA.

This illustrious virgin sister of St. Benedict was, like himself, favored early in life with extraordinary graces, and gave herself to God in early childhood. When she became of age, she retired to Mount Cassino and founded there a convent for the persons of her sex, at a distance of five miles from her brother's monastery. Every year brother and sister visited each other in order to edify each other by pious conversations. At the time of their last interview, after spending the day in singing psalms, and speaking of God, they took together their evening repast. St. Scholastica, who knew that her end was nigh, urged her brother not to leave her, and to continue with her, during

the night, a conversation which was so useful to her soul. Benedict having rejected this request, as a grievous infraction of religious discipline, Scholastica betook herself to prayer, and immediately, although the heavens had been quite serene, a great tempest arose, claps of thunder were heard, and a torrent of rain fell from the clouds which made it impossible for Benedict to return to his monastery. They, therefore, passed the whole night conversing about God and the glory of the elect. Three days after Scholastica died, and her brother saw her soul going up to heaven in the form of a dove. Let us learn from this saint.—

1st.—HOW MUCH WE OUGHT TO LOVE SOLITUDE.

2d.—WHAT ADVANTAGES THERE ARE IN HOLY CONVERSATIONS.

3d.—WHAT GREAT POWER IS FOUND IN INNOCENCE.

1st Point. *Love of solitude.* St. Scholastica had hardly heard of the retirement of her brother from the world, than she also felt a great desire to imitate him. She had already attempted to lead a solitary life in the very house of her parents; but God had great designs upon her; many virgins were called after her example to give themselves up to the Divine King. She had found God, she could relish Him alone. Her soul thirsted after Him who is the very source of strength and of life. How she welcomed the day on which she could say in truth: "*Lo, I have gone far off flying away, and I abode in the wilderness.*"—(Ps. Liv: 8.) According to St. Lawrence Justinian, to seek solitude ardently, and to maintain oneself in it with constancy, is the most efficacious means of obtaining the habit of meditation and interior life.

To converse with God, the mind should be calm; and solitude is a tranquil haven. To approach the center of purity, the heart should be pure; and solitude is the grave of the passions which defile it; it initiates us, as it were, into the life of angels. Grace is necessary in order to pray well, but nowhere is it as abundant as in solitude, for this is the place in which the Holy Ghost wishes to find us, when He wishes to speak to our hearts. "*I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart.*"—(Osce. ii: 14.) "Know you," says Father Nouet,

"why does not God make you more frequent and familiar visits? It is because He either finds you in the world, or because He finds the world in you. He loves to converse in secret, and your soul is hardly ever alone."

2d Point. *Great advantages of spiritual conversations.* Once in the year only, did St. Scholastica enjoy the happiness of conversing with her brother, and that conversation sufficed to inflame her soul and guide it in all the ways of perfection. The last time she enjoyed this favor, was for her, as it were, a proximate preparation for death. Great are the fruits which may result from pious conversations! An evidence of this we find in the conversations of Ignatius with Xavier, of St. Francis de Sales with Madame de Chantal. of St. Paul with Titus and Timothy; and let us add of Jesus Christ with His apostles, with the Samaritan woman, Zaccheus, Mary Magdalen and others. What is there more touching than what is related by St. Augustine? "The time was not distant when my mother was to leave the world. One day she and I, leaning on a window on the sea shore, alone, and without witnesses, conversed together with inexpressible suavity. Forgetting the past, that we might think only on the blessed days to come, we sought in Thy presence, O God, Who art unchangeable truth, what will be that happiness which the eye of man has not seen, and which the heart of man is incapable of conceiving. Our hearts became, as it were, wide open to receive the outpourings of that supreme felicity of which Thou art the source. We lifted up ourselves, up even to Thee,—by speaking of Thee and admiring Thy works. We already tasted to some extent the delights of the life to come, through the upward flights of our desires."

The conversation of saints is in heaven.—(Phi. iii: 2.) Where is mine? They never tire speaking of God, and hearing others speak of Him. Have I a taste for devout conversations?

3d Point. *Power of innocence.* David exclaims: "*How good is God to Israel, to them that are of a right heart!*"—(Ps. lxxii: 1.) And in another psalm: "*Who shall ascend unto the mountain of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place? The innocent in hand and clean of heart.*"—(Ps. xxiii: 3, 4.)

A pure soul that is not conscious of any sin, feels itself at peace in the presence of God; from Him it dares expect everything. Whoever

possesses the heart of God possesses, as it were, His power. Scholastica wishes to prolong through the entire night a conversation which increased the fervor of her love. A miracle seems necessary to accomplish this object; see with what candor she asks for it, and how easily she obtains it! She leans her head on the table, and waters it with her tears, and the very instant that she raises it again, the rain pours down in such abundance that Benedict cannot go out. What amiable naivety in her answer to her brother! He wishes to rebuke her, because of the infraction of religious discipline which he had committed through her action; he said to Scholastica: "God forgive you, sister, what did you do?"—"You are very good indeed, my brother," she replied, "but God is better than you are; I made you a request and you refused me; I had recourse to God, and He heard me. Go away now if you can." But how didst thou, a timid virgin, how didst thou dare resist thy brother, the great Benedict, whom thou regardest as thy oracle? How didst thou learn that there might be something better in that moment, than the observing of the strict rule which he had given and which he was bound to sustain by his example? Ah, how much light there is in a pure soul, and how great its credit with the heart of God!

Let us meditate upon, and often consider the prayer appointed by the Church to be read on this day. "O God, who in order to make manifest the path of innocence, didst cause the soul of Thy blessed virgin Scholastica to enter heaven, in the form of a dove, grant us by the aid of her merits and prayers, to live so innocently that we may be found worthy to reach the joys of everlasting life."

1st Point. *Love of solitude.* Scholastica had found God, Him alone she could relish. How she welcomed the day on which she was permitted to say: "*I have gone far off, flying away, and I abode in the wilderness!*" To seek diligently for solitude, and maintain oneself in it with constancy is the most efficacious means to possess interior life. Solitude is a tranquil haven; it is the grave of passions, it facilitates the practice of prayer and initiates us into the angelical life.

2d Point. *Great advantages of spiritual conversations.* Remember the conversations of Scholastica with St. Benedict, of St. Ignatius

with Xavier, of St. Paul with Titus and Timothy, of St. Monica and St. Augustine. The conversation of saints is in heaven. Where is mine?

3d Point. *Power of innocence.* A pure soul feels itself happy in the presence of God, and presumes to hope for everything from Him. Whoever possesses the heart of God, possesses His power. What was Scholastica's wish? With what candor she asked for, and how easily she obtained it!

LXXIV. MEDITATION.

FEBRUARY 24th—ELECTION OF ST. MATHIAS—CONTEMPLATION.

FIRST PRELUDE.—The apostles having returned to Jerusalem after the ascension, withdrew into the cenacle, there to wait for the Holy Ghost, as Jesus Christ had commanded them. The disciples assembled there also; and St. Mathias was one of them. Then it was that Peter, in the midst of the assembly, proposed to have the place of Judas filled. Two disciples were presented; all began to pray, and the lot fell upon Mathias, who was associated to the eleven apostles.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Represent to yourself the cenacle, the place of this reunion, already consecrated by the institution of the Eucharist, by the apparition of Jesus after His resurrection, and which soon was to receive a new consecration through the descent of the Holy Ghost.

THIRD PRELUDE.—O God, to whom alone it belongs to choose Thy ambassadors and Thy ministers, give me to understand the excellence of this vocation, and grant me the grace, as Thou didst to St. Mathias, to faithfully fulfill all its obligations.

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons.* All the members who make up this assembly, the apostles, the disciples. The whole Church is represented in this place wherein you see its visible head, the teaching body and a part of the faithful. What peace and charity in this reunion of brethren! You will notice here no trace of intrigue, not a word, not an action denoting the least ambition. Enter the souls of those who are about to present members for election, or of those who are liable to be elected; you will find in all a quiet humility, holy indifference, and

a fear rather than a desire to be raised to a dignity which requires so many virtues and has so great responsibility attached to it. They seek only the glory of God, and the advantage of the Church. How high the idea which each one of them has of the mission of an apostle, and particularly of the mission which will soon be intrusted to the successor of Judas! How great should his holiness be so as to repair the scandal, and cause one to forget the frightful fall! If our consciences reproach us with nothing concerning our vocation, if it really was the work of the Holy Ghost, let us bless the Lord for it; but let us often remember the admonition which was addressed to us: *Perfecti esse debent qui divinis mancipantur officiis.*

2d and 3d Points. *Consider the actions, hear the words.* Peter feels inspired to now use the supreme power given him by Jesus Christ. Rising in the midst of his brethren, he speaks with authority, interprets and applies the Scripture with intelligence, and wisely lays down the rules for the election. They listen to him silently, and execute immediately what he has proposed. Whence come to him this assurance this sacred learning, this art of governing, this primacy of power and jurisdiction which no one attempts to contest? Is he not that fisherman of Galilee, who hitherto knew nought but his ship and his nets? Ah! we know from whom he received the power which he exercises; we still imagine hearing our Lord saying to him: *Feed My lambs, feed My sheep.* The Church in her infancy, considers him as holding the place of the Son of God who has gone up to heaven. We already begin to see in the apostles and in their chief, the workings of the Spirit which Jesus communicated to them, when He breathed on them on the day of His resurrection.

Peter begins by reminding them of the crime of Judas, who was the leader of them who apprehended Jesus. He ought to have been the leader and guide of the disciples of the Son of God; and he puts himself at the head of those who crucified Him. It was not that a true vocation had been wanting to him. He had been numbered with the apostles, and had obtained part of their ministry. Peter reminds them next, of Judas' punishment. Being hanged he burst asunder in the midst, and finally shows the necessity of finding him a successor, another one to take his bishopric. Peter proposes, and lays down the object of the election, which was the naming a twelfth apostle who

would receive the plentitude of the gifts of the Holy Ghost ; and would by his preaching, and the sacrifice of his life, testify, not to the resurrection of Christ only, but also to the truth of all that He had taught and confirmed by this resurrection. Peter wishes the whole Church to participate in this election ; to her indeed it is of paramount interest to have none but saintly pastors ! "*And they appointed two ; Joseph called Barrabas, who was surnamed Justus and Mathias.*" Next to this nomination, in which all concurred, they all addressed to God the following prayer : "*Thou O Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show whither of these two Thou hast chosen, to take the place of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas has by transgression fallen, that he might go to his own place.*" These last words must have been terrifying to the devout assembly, but particularly to him on whom the choice fell, *that he might go to his own place.* What place is this to which Judas went, and which he made his eternal dwelling ? What abyss is this, from which the holy ministry itself cannot save, nay to the lowest depths of which the same ministry precipitates those who dare profane it? There was here much food for reflection for St. Mathias. "*The lot fell upon Mathias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.*"

Let us be satisfied with returning thanks to God for our vocation, and considering in what manner we have corresponded with it. Let the election of St. Mathias re-animate our desire, to contribute by all possible means to the sanctification of the clergy, which is the first object of the solicitude of the Church. It was principally for the end of obtaining holy priests, that she instituted the fasts of the ember days, and again, it is with a view of obtaining the same result, that she addresses to God prayers so fervent in the ordination of her ministers. She daily recommends them to the intercession of Mary, *Sancta Maria . . . interveni pro clero ;* and she hastens their entrance unto glory by reciting a special prayer for them in the *missa pro defunctis.* . . . All the work of the Church rests with the priests. From them she expects the praises of her adorable spouse and the salvation of her children. Let us, therefore, pray and induce others to pray for the priests. St. Therese used to say to her daughters , "Ask God for two favors : the first that He may please to give manly courage to the officers of His Church ; the second that He sustain them in the battle, and close their ears to the

songs of the siren. . . . Imagine not that it is useless to be thus continually engaged in praying for the defenders of God's Church. Believe me there is no prayer either better or more profitable than such a prayer."—(Chem. de la perfection, Ch. iii.)

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons.* Disciples, apostles, the whole Church with its head represented in the cenacle. What peace, what charity reigns here! Nothing here that denotes ambition. The glory of God, the general good of the Church, are the only sentiments which occupy the hearts and the minds of all.

2d and 3d Points. *Consider the actions, hear the words.* Peter begins the exercise of the supreme power which he has received. He speaks: They listen to him silently, and immediately carry out his commands. He reminds them of the crime of Judas and of its frightful punishment. He proposes the election, and points out its object. Let us beseech Almighty God to send holy priests to His Church; and let us often pray for the clergy.

LXXV. MEDITATION.

MARCH 7th—ST. THOMAS AQUINAS—ECCLESIASTICAL STUDY.

Saint Thomas was born of an illustrious family of the kingdom of Naples, at the beginning of the year 1225. From early childhood he showed an extraordinary inclination for study. At the age of 17 he entered the order of St. Dominic, notwithstanding the violence and diabolical efforts made use of in order to frustrate his design. The penetration of his mind, the extent of his learning, united to an admirable purity and devotion, deserved for him the appellation of *the angelical doctor.* Jesus Christ having said to him one day: Thou hast well written of Me, Thomas, what reward dost thou desire? He answered: None else but Thyself, O Lord. By the order of the Pope Urban IV., he composed the office for the feast of the most holy sacrament. This mystery was the great object of his devotion. He constantly refused the digni-

ties which were offered to him, and died in 1274. Let us meditate today on the important subject of ecclesiastical study.

1st.—NECESSITY OF ECCLESIASTICAL STUDY.

2d.—ITS GREAT ADVANTAGES.

3d.—DISPOSITIONS IT REQUIRES.

1st Point. *The priest should always study ;* either to acquire additional knowledge, or to preserve that which he has acquired.

I. Study in order to learn. Who is the priest, however learned he may be supposed to be, who does not feel the necessity of enlarging the circle of his knowledge? Ecclesiastical science is immense. The more one advances in this field, the further do its limits appear to recede. *Docete—teach ;* such is our mission, the first of our functions. In order to teach religion, we should have a perfect knowledge of it. St. Paul wishes us to be able to exhort in sound doctrine, and to convince the gainsayers. Where shall we find that precision and exactness of expression necessary to expound the dogmas of faith, and the principles of morals, except in deep, continuous study? Apart from the clerical education we received in the seminary, there is another, sacerdotal, pastoral education which we ought to obtain. We ought, moreover, to be priests of our own day, and when human sciences are in the way of progress, when an emulation which tends to generalize, leads minds toward learning, can the clergy neglect to obtain for themselves a kind of consideration which it needs in order to do good?

II. *Study necessary to preserve knowledge already acquired.* The faculties of our minds wear out as fast as those of the body when we cease to improve them, and we soon forget what we had learned best. Let us cite two weighty authorities: "*Præpara opus tuum, monet Spiritus Sanctus, et cum id minime sufficiat, statim subdit: et diligenter exerce agrum tuum. Utinam non contingeret, quod tamem frequentissime videmus, aliquot nempe sacerdotes, qui initio præclarissime confessarii munus susceperunt, deinde . . . . omni studiorum cura neglecta, pristinam moralis theologiæ scientiam amittere, ita ut, qui in ejusmodi arte peritissimi fuerant, tandem exigua solum confusaque*

ipsius artis scientia, primisque rudimentis instructi, vix inter tyrones adnumerentur."—(Ben. xiv, inst. de Sac. Pœn.) "*Nullus confessarius intermittere debet theologiæ moralis studium; quia ex tot diversis quæ ad hanc scientiam pertinent, multa quamvis lecta, temporis progressu decedunt e mente.*"—(St. Lig. pronis confess.) Let us believe experience. Though we do our best, we shall always have to say, "*remember not my ignorances*," but we shall be able to say it without uneasiness to our conscience, if we have not neglected anything in order to learn what we were obliged to know, and to preserve the knowledge already acquired.

2d Point. *Great advantages to be found in ecclesiastical study.* It helps to obtain sacerdotal sanctity, and at the same time protects and defends it.

I. A retired life, recollection, spirit of sacrifice, the lawful and continual exercise of our intellectual faculties, are in reality the means which hasten progress toward true sanctity, but this is precisely what we find in being faithful to our sacred studies. Separation from the world and from its frivolities is the first duty of a studious priest; his study room and his Church are the places he loves. He likes to reflect, to remain by himself and with his books. He shapes his conduct on the teachings of reason, and observation. There is in his will a firmness and constancy which make him walk without deviation or weakness toward the goal which he intends to reach. When you mention a studious priest, you mention a man of energy; for science is not acquired without efforts. He never permits his soul to become torpid, and continually provides his natural activity with useful alimentation. . . . What is there better calculated to make us advance in sacerdotal sanctity?

II. Ecclesiastical study whilst sanctifying us, guards us against many storms which, without it, would certainly assail us. Though we be given to study, we shall not indeed escape every kind of temptation; but these will be less dangerous. Study has been left to the priest as a powerful weapon to withdraw him from the tyranny of the senses. It chains down the imagination, that enemy so dreadful when we allow it to wander astray in its dreams. There is no way left to temptation to reach as far as the soul, when the spirit, filled with serious thought, reduces the body to merely passive functions. Study purifies man,

spiritualizes him, disengages him, in a manner, from its gross, material envelope, and frees him from all that is terrestrial. In the matter of Divine science, the heart and the mind are, as it were, the two plates of the balance; plunge the mind into study, and the heart rises up to heaven.

3d Point. *Dispositions which study requires.* Science has its dangers: *knowledge puffeth up.* Not to speak of rash curiosity, of indocile presumption; it is to be feared that familiarity with our august mysteries may occasion the sacred truths to depart from the heart, in proportion as they enter the mind. It might happen that, the more deeply we consider them, the less we relish them: *Utilis lèctio*, says St. Bernard, *utilis eruditio, sed multo magis unctio necessaria.* St. Paulinus wrote to one of his friends: *Philosophiam fide condias.* St. Thomas used to say that he had learned more at the foot of the crucifix than in books. In order to acquire the science of God, prayer becomes the indispensable auxiliary of study. "*If thou shalt call for wisdom . . . . thou shalt find the knowledge of God.*"—(Prov. ii.) Let us study methodically, assiduously, but without excitement.

The most important point is to often ask ourselves, what object have we in view when at study? Let us hear St. Bernard: *Sunt qui scire volunt eo fine tantum ut sciant, et turpis curiositas est; sunt qui scire volunt ut sciantur, et turpis vanitas est; sunt qui scire volunt ut scientiam vendant, et turpis quæstus est; sunt quoque qui scire volunt ut ædificent, et caritas est; et item qui scire volunt ut ædificentur, et prudentia est.* These two last intentions, viz. a desire to sanctify oneself, and a desire to sanctify our fellow-beings, are the only ends that a good priest should propose to himself.

1st Point. *The priest has always a need to study.* I. In order to acquire new knowledge. The scope of ecclesiastical study is immense. St. Paul wills us to be able to teach according to sound doctrine, and to convince the gainsayers. Deep, continuous study alone can enable us to expose with exactness and precision the dogmas of faith and the principles of morals. The clergy should enjoy the esteem of seculars; and in our day, unfortunately, more consideration is annexed to science than to virtue. It is desirable that the clergy should impart the proper

direction to the movement which leads men toward learning. II. In order to preserve already acquired knowledge. It is easy to forget what we once knew. This is the teaching of the doctors and also of experience.

2d Point. *Great advantages of ecclesiastical study.* It helps in the acquirement of sacerdotal virtue, and protects it. Through a retired life, holy recollection, the spirit of sacrifice, the lawful exercise of our intellectual faculties. It protects virtue. Study controls the imagination, spiritualizes man, withdraws him from the tyranny of the senses. In the matter of the science of God, when the mind becomes imbued with it, the heart rises up to heaven.

3d Point. *Dispositions which study requires.* Learning has its dangers: *knowledge puffeth up.* It is liable to foster pride, and to weaken or destroy piety. Let us sanctify study, and make it profitable by prayer, as the saints did, and particularly as St. Thomas used to do. Let us have no other object in our studies, save a desire to procure our sanctification and that of our neighbor.

LXXVI. MEDITATION.

MARCH 19th—SAINT JOSEPH—HIS PRIVILEGES.

1st—AS HUSBAND OF MARY.

2d—AS FOSTER FATHER OF JESUS.

Our devotion toward a saint whose name is associated with the sweet names of Jesus and of Mary, demands of us to render him a threefold homage: veneration, because of his greatness; imitation, because of his virtues; confidence, because of his power, and of his desire to give us efficacious assistance: *Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus.*

1st Point. *Privileges of St. Joseph as husband of Mary.* This is his first title to our veneration and congratulations. All the beauty and

glory which shine in the holy virgin, redound upon him whom God Himself had given her as a husband. Was there ever a more suitable alliance? What sort of man must be the blessed mortal chosen amongst all men by the Lord, to share the destiny of His mother? This distinction alone raised St. Joseph to a dignity almost as glorious for him as was the Divine maternity for Mary. Let him then, like Mary, express his gratitude and admiration by saying: "He who is mighty has done great things to me." Joseph was the husband of Mary. Mary, the creature of an order all Divine, raised above all the others by so many privileges: immaculate conception, virginal parturition, death caused by love, anticipated resurrection, triumphant assumption. . . . Mary adorned with all the virtues, with all the perfections compatible with human nature; Mary, whom all the doctors, all the saints, all the tongues, all generations have praised and shall praise forever; Mary, from the hand of God Himself, received a husband worthy of her, and this husband is Joseph. To him, therefore, we may apply the words: "*There was not found the like to him in glory.*"—(Eccl. xliv: 20.)

Blessed Joseph, thou needst not regret the throne of David, or the crown of Juda. Thy quality of husband of Mary, was worth to thee more than all the thrones of the universe. Tell if thou canst, the dower which this admirable spouse brought to thee, and the fruits which thou dost derive from this sacred alliance. Tell us of the rich treasures which fell to thy lot, through the presence, the conversation, the prayer and ardent charity of Mary through the space of thirty years. On her, God had poured the plentitude of His graces, and as she loved thee more than any spouse ever loved her husband, all the advantages that she enjoyed, she desired to share with thee. Fully penetrated as she was with the sentiments of her Son, she would have desired to kindle everywhere the sacred fire of Divine love! But how ardent must be the flames which she kindled in the heart of Joseph, a heart prepared as it was, to receive all heavenly favors.

O priest, congratulate St. Joseph, admire his vocation; but think also on your own. As husband of Mary, Joseph is the head of the holy family. Nothing was done in it save by his order and direction. To him the angels speak directly when it is question of going to Egypt or of returning to Judea; to him, as well as to Mary, is revealed the name of the adorable infant. The Lord censtituted him the head of His

house, the master and lord of Mary, and she faithfully observes toward him the law imposed on all wives. "*Let wives be subject to their husbands.*"—(I. Pet. iii : 1.) He confides to him all that is most dear to Him. "*Appoints him the lord of His house, and prince over all His possessions.*" He makes him His agent, His minister in the direction of a mystery which it is not time yet to manifest to the world. . . . O priests ! this is also what you are, in the Church, in that house of God, wherein you exercise so many powers, wherein you perform so many sublime functions, where you co-operate with so many designs of mercy !

As husband of Mary, Joseph was her great benefactor ; he saved her honor, her life ; he acquired innumerable claims to her gratitude through all that he did and suffered, for her Son and for her. . . Good priests deserve the consideration and esteem of the Virgin Mary. For were it not for them, O holy virgin, thy altars would not be decorated, thy festivals would not be celebrated ; nay, wouldst thou, without the priests, have altars and festivals ? Thou owest them more than thy glory, since they procure the glory of thy Son. Is it not owing to their zeal that He is known and adored ? O my God, Thou hast then called me to rejoice the heart of Thy mother ! I am in a state where I have a thousand ways to procure for myself her warmest affection. For this be Thou forever blest ! Cease not, I pray, to increase my love for her. When this love shall be perfect, I shall have nothing to desire in heaven, where all will contribute to my happiness ; neither will I have anything to desire on earth, for the love of Mary detaches the heart from the world, in which there is nothing which can please, as there is nothing which can harm, her faithful servants.

2d Point. *Privileges of Joseph considered as father of Jesus, "of whom was born Jesus."* This title is a consequence of the other. *Si vir Mariæ*, says St. Jerome, *et pater Dei est.* Thinking on this privilege, the mind is astounded in considering the glories of St. Joseph. We see him in a manner associated to the glory of the Divine paternity, since he is the father of a Son who is the only Son of God Himself ; he is father, not merely as a courteous title, but by the delegation of the eternal Father who gives him, over the Word incarnate, the rights of a father over his son ; father he is, through the operation of the Holy Ghost, who created in him a paternal heart, and im-

parted to it toward Jesus Christ, all the sentiments, all the emotions, all the devotedness of the heart of a father. He became, by grace, that which he was not by nature. Like Mary, he was filled with admiration and joy when he heard of the great things that the Child was to accomplish. "*His father and His mother were wondering concerning the things that were said of Him.*" Like Mary, he is bowed down with sorrow when he thinks that he has lost this dear object of his affection. Think of his anxiety, of his tears when he returns to Jerusalem in search of Jesus! "They return to Jerusalem seeking Him." "Where is He? What has become of the precious treasure which heaven had confided to my care?" How deep was their affliction! but how well did Mary know the heart of Joseph, when, after finding Jesus, she exclaimed: "*Behold, Thy father and I sought Thee sorrowing.*"

Admirable paternity of St. Joseph, as consoling for us as it was glorious for him! Did he become the father of the Son of God, without becoming the father of his adopted children? Can the father of Jesus not consider as his children, those whom Jesus considers His brothers? We know it, O great saint, thou hast the heart of a father for the Word incarnate, and thou hast the same sentiments for all those who through Him, and in Him, have become the children of God! We desire to participate in the sentiments of Jesus toward thee—viz, in his filial affection, his respect, his unbounded confidence.

Let us not omit in our meditation the inestimable prerogatives enjoyed by St. Joseph as a consequence of this paternity. As father of Jesus, his duty was to provide for Him. He who gives food to all those who are hungry, wished to receive his daily nourishment from a poor tradesman, who had no other resource save the labor of his hands. By the sweat of his brow Joseph earns the means to sustain the life of Jesus; and this life is to be the salvation of the world! . . . The good priest will also be comforted amidst the labors and trials of his ministry. If he will say to himself: I wear myself out; I perhaps shorten the days of my existence; but Jesus will live and reign in the hearts of men; I contribute to the salvation of immortal souls.

Joseph's office, as father of Jesus, was to be His guide. He exteriorly guided Him who governs the world. He commands Him whose behest every creature obeys in heaven and on earth. "*He was subject*

to them." Those three words only did the Savior's historians leave to us concerning eighteen years of a life which was a series of prodigies.

They undoubtedly desired by this, to draw our attention to this great wonder, of a God so perfectly, and for so long a time, subject to a man. This wonder, however, is continued amongst us through the ministry of the priest. What do we do at the altar? Do we not exercise toward the same God an authority more surprising still? Joseph commanded the sovereign Lord in the days of His humble, mortal life! and we dispose of Him at our will, in the days of His glory!

Joseph, as father of Jesus, was bound to protect, to defend, and if necessary, to save Him. He in fact, saved the life of Jesus when he hid Him from the fury of Herod. . . . Will he be the only one man to enjoy that honor? No. The priest shares it also with Joseph. The good priest is also the protector and, in a manner, the savior of Jesus. He protects His honor against the outrages of incredulity, of impiety and licentiousness. He protects His adorable presence in the Eucharist against irreverences and sacrilegious profanations; he protects His life, in the souls of men against mortal sin which banishes Him from them. If, through my zeal, I prevent a grave infraction of the law of God, I preserve Jesus, as St. Paul says, from another crucifixion.—(Heb. vi: 6.)

Finally, as father of Jesus, Joseph receives from Him those tokens of tender affection, which contribute so much to the comfort and happiness of parents. Enter reverently in the spirit the household of the holy family. Behold Joseph holding in his arms the infant Jesus, who calls him father, lavishes upon him the most tender caresses and courts him to return them. Who shall ever be able to tell of the delights which then filled the heart of the happy father? But the priest who receives communion every day, enjoys fully the same privilege. He possesses the same treasure, possesses it in a more intimate manner. . . . Give me, O my God, the purity, give me the love of this great saint; I will then have no reason to envy his vocation and dignity.

1st Point. *Privileges of St. Joseph, as husband of Mary.* All the honor and glory of Mary are reflected in her spouse. What sort of a man must he have been who was chosen by God Himself amongst all others, to participate in the destiny of His mother, to be her protector

and support?—Joseph is the head of the holy family ; nothing is done there except by his order, and under his direction. To him it is that angels speak. God made him His agent in the direction and execution of one of the most magnificent designs. Consider the priest's position.

2d Point. *Privileges of Joseph, as father of Jesus.* God gives him over the World incarnate the rights of a father over his son.—As father of Jesus, his duty was to nourish Him. Joseph earns the livelihood of Jesus by the sweat of His brow. He commands Him whose behests heaven and earth obey. He is in duty bound to defend Him, to save His life ; it was Joseph who hid Him from the fury of Herod, thus becoming the savior of Him who is the Savior of all.—Finally, as father of Jesus, Joseph receives from Jesus those tokens of affection which contribute so much to the happiness of parents. It is also my privilege to participate in all the favors which were lavished upon this great saint. O my God, give me his purity, his devotedness, his charity, and I will have no reason to envy his vocation and dignity.

LXXVII. MEDITATION.

THREE VIRTUES OF ST. JOSEPH, PARTICULARLY PROPOSED TO PRIESTS FOR THEIR IMITATION.

1st.—HIS LIVELY FAITH.

2d.—HIS PROFOUND HUMILITY.

3d.—HIS FIRM HOPE.

1st Point. *Lively faith of St. Joseph.* When God destines a man to some sublime office, He adorns him with all the graces that are suitable to that vocation, and enables him to fulfill it worthily. Before Joseph was elevated to the glorious dignity of husband of Mary, and to the duties annexed to it, he had been prepared for it by the gift of an admirable faith. The blessedness of Mary consisted in having believed. *Blessed art thou that hast believed.* On this account also was Joseph

blessed. He believes that through the power of God, the most fruitful maternity is not incompatible with the most pure virginity, and that Mary is destined to realize this wonder. He believes that this poor Babe now borne in a stable, destitute of comforts, is the King of Kings, the Creator of the universe, the joy of angels, the terror of devils. He believes that the Son of God, who came amongst men to save them, wishes to be Himself saved by a man, and that he, Joseph, being chosen for this extraordinary ministry, must carry Him away into Egypt, across deserts, although, to all appearances, this flight if full of perils and almost impracticable. His faith gains additional strength from all that he sees and from all that he hears; even obstacles contribute to its constancy, and then Almighty God almost unveils Himself to His faithful servant. He reveals to him His secrets, makes known to him His designs . . . allows him to penetrate the depth of the mystery of the Incarnate Word.

Hence came that deep respect which never left him in his most familiar relations with the infant Jesus, nay, in the very exercise of his authority over Him. Whilst commanding, he adores the Son of God. Thence came also that sweet, continuous contemplation, those delights of a future life which he began to taste in this very world.

Holiness and happiness are the fruits of a lively faith. By faith, we believe what we do not see; and by a lively faith we, in some measure, see what we believe. Faith, says St. Augustine, is the look of the heart. If this look is penetrating, if it pierces the cloud, if it only catches a glimpse of the Divine splendor, immediately love kindles into a flame; but now, what else is love in its plentitude and in its elevation, but perfection on earth and beatitude in heaven? Ah, how advantageous for priests is this faith, resplendent with light, burning with the flames of holy love! The priesthood, says Pope St. Leo, is a profession made up of faith and humility. It should be composed of supernatural, heavenly men. But if faith will not teach us the value of souls, where shall we find those generous flights, that devotedness of zeal, that patience and tenderness of compassion necessary to those whose duty it is to save souls? How shall we stand at the altar with that profound religion, with that holy trembling, which the presence of Jesus should inspire, if we perceive not, as it were, the rays of

His glory through the appearances which hide Him from our eyes of flesh?

2d Point. *St. Joseph's humility.* Great were the humiliations he had to suffer, amidst the favors lavished upon him. He was the descendant of the most illustrious family of the world, a family which was to give humankind a Redeemer, which counted up twenty-three kings amongst its ancestors . . . and he is reduced to indigence, so that in order to live he has to work at a common trade, in the very places in which his ancestors had swayed the sceptre. Joseph is at the mercy of the most ordinary men of his people; he has to bear with their caprices, their ignorance and pride; to thank them when they employ him, and pay him for his hard work. . . . Such was the condition imposed upon him by Providence. Far from complaining, he returns thanks to God, and accepts the humiliations of this state of life. Of his family he never speaks. He is willing to pass for a man of the lowest class, and to be known as the son of a tradesman of the most common kind. He seeks no other glory, has no other ambition than to be hid from the world, in order to be the more faithful to his God. But the favors which he received of Him were perhaps a greater trial for his humility than actual humiliations.

Joseph was the depository of a secret which interested mankind in the highest degree. Had he chosen to make known the mystery of a God Incarnate confided to his care, he would undoubtedly have acquired much personal consideration, and at the same time procured much glory to Jesus Christ. Why does he not reveal it, at least to some trusted friends? This, it seems, would have been his duty for the glory of God and the accomplishment of His designs. This Messiah, so ardently desired, had come down on earth for the sake of men, and, according to God's designs, was to be known by them sooner or later; could He be made known too soon? There were many motives to induce Joseph to speak. How many pretexts would self-love have suggested to us in an occasion so delicate! . . . Joseph is silent. His mission was not to make the Messiah known; but on the contrary, to cover Him under the veil of his own obscurity, until the day marked out for His manifestation.

O Joseph, I revere in you this obscurity within which Divine majesty conceals itself. Your glory appears only to the eyes of God

and of His angels; men are not capable of appreciating it. Obtain for me the grace to comprehend and to relish a maxim which you practiced so well, and which I never read without terror to my pride: *Ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari.* Obtain for me this humility, which is the most beautiful ornament of the priesthood, the principle of all graces, the source of all good: "*Humilitas sacerdotum gemma.*"—(St. Laur. Just.) "*Nulla splendidior gemma . . . humilitate.*"—(St. Bern.) "*Sancta humilitas exhibet præsulem possessorem sui, acceptum Deo, hominibus charum, dignum cœlo, angelorum socium, præditum sanctitate receptaculum Paracleti, contemptorem mundi diaboli victorem.*"—(St. Laur. Just.)

3d Point. *Hope of St. Joseph.* His annoyances and trials only contribute to make his confidence in God the stronger and unchangeable. Of him it may be said as of Abraham, that *he hoped against all hope.* His lively faith had lifted him up so high above the things of earth, that the lowliness of his condition was the least of his trials; it being painful to him only inasmuch as it occasioned privations and sufferings to Jesus and to Mary. How grieved he felt at Bethlehem, seeing he could offer no other dwelling but a stable to her whom the Messiah had chosen for His mother, and who, at this very time, was about to give Him to the world. . . . Yet not even then did his confidence in God fail him; and it never was more clearly justified. This night, so sadly begun, shall overflow the hearts of Mary and Joseph with delights truly ineffable.

When the angel commanded him to go into Egypt, he did not stop to ask who would be his guide, who would supply the money for the journey, who would provide for the Child and His mother in a country where they would be without means of subsistence. He does not even inquire about the duration of this exile; for him it suffices to know that God orders it.

The most painful of his trials was his cruel perplexity about the state of his holy spouse, whilst he was yet ignorant of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God in her sacred womb. What was he to do? He has recourse to prayer; he turns to God, who will not forsake him in an affliction so legitimate. Blessed was that moment when the angel of the Lord came to tell him: *Joseph, Son of David, fear not to take to*

thee Mary for thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

O blessed hope, virtue of great souls, thou art, in a special manner, the virtue of apostolic men. *Magna audent*, says St. Bernard, *qui magni sunt.* When, by the order of heaven, we are engaged in a work, it is not perils and oppositions we have to fear but our own pusillanimity. *I can do all in Him who comforts me;* behold the maxim of the priest who lives by faith. He first finds what the will of God is, and then he rises above all terrors, above all so-called impossibilities. He even feels a secret pleasure in seeing himself destitute of all human support, because he then throws himself with greater confidence into the arms of Providence. Remember St. Francis Xavier, St. Vincent de Paul, and so many others. There is nothing that so much honors God as the omnipotence of those who confide in Him: "*Nihil omnipotentiam Dei clariorem reddit, quam quod omnipotentes facit omnes qui in se sperant.*"—(St. Bern.) Why did I deny myself for so long a time the merit and sweetness of a virtue which fills the soul with so much calmness, strength and consolation? "*Qui omnem sollicitudinem suam in Deum jactat, habet ipsum Dominum in provisorem.*"—(St. Bon.) "*Cujus est fortitudo Dominus, tam non cadit quam non cadit Dominus.*"—(St. Aug.) "*O spes, tu omnia portare facis dulciter et suaviter.*"—(Id.) St. Laurence Justinian says of hope: "*Ipsa est in labore requies, in æstu temperies, in fletu solatium.*"—(Tract. de spe. c. 2.)

1st Point. *Lively faith of St. Joseph.* Mary was blessed because she had believed. So it was with St. Joseph. His faith remains unshaken, notwithstanding darkness and apparent impossibilities. Almighty God rewards his faith with intimate communications, which give him a great insight into the Divine mysteries. Hence came that profound spirit of religion which moved him to adore the Infant Jesus, whilst commanding Him. Hence also came for him a sweet, continuous contempletion.

2d Point. *Humility of St. Joseph.* It had to triumph over humiliations and over heavenly favors. He was descendant of the most illustrious family of the universe; and instead of bearing the sceptre as many of his ancestors had done, he had to eat his bread by the sweat of

his brow, as the least of tradesmen. This obscure condition he accepted readily. His humility appeared in a still stronger light, midst the great favors which heaven lavished upon him. Neither his august alliance with the mother of God, nor the sublime functions which it necessitated caused him to forget his nothingness. How greatly would he have been esteemed, had they known the glorious ministry confided unto him. Joseph, however, is careful not to mention it.

3d Point. *Hope of St. Joseph.* Contradictions strengthen far from shaking his hope. At Bethlehem, where he finds no lodging place; when starting to, or returning from Egypt, he hopes against hope. Think of the joy which his confidence in God procured for him, on the day that an angel came to tell him: *"Joseph, son of David, fear not to take to thee Mary for thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."*

LXXVIII. MEDITATION.

MARCH 21st—ST. BENEDICT.

Although the festival of this day is particularly dear to religious, since St. Benedict had received the special mission of tracing rules for their guidance, and of spreading the doctrine which should teach them, it has an equal interest for the priests whose office it is to direct the souls of religious, and all those that are called to perfection. He was born about the year 480, in the duchy of Spoleto, of parents distinguished by their nobility and wealth. Being sent to Rome when he was seven years old, he made rapid progress in human sciences, and still more rapid strides in the science of salvation. When he had reached his fifteenth year, he sought in the desert a shelter for his innocence. Among steep rocks, surrounded with chasms, he perceived a grotto shaped like a grave; here he abode during three years, having no other confident of his secret abode save a charitable man, who brought him some pieces of bread every week. He was, however, found out by monks of the neighborhood, who, by dint of entreaties, induced him to come and govern them; but he had hardly endeavored to make them

enter the narrow path of their profession, than they refused to obey him, and resolved to do away with his life. They presented to him in the refectory a glass which contained poison; but he, having blessed it according to his custom with the sign of the cross, it at once fell to pieces, and he returned to his solitude.

He was followed thither by so great a number of disciples, that he built in his desert as many as twelve monasteries. Later on he founded that of Monte Cassino, which became the chief house of his order. Here it was that he wrote his rule, which is a perfect code of religious sanctification. Here also he died, in the year 543, on the 21st day of March. At the moment of his death, two of his religious living far apart, in two different monasteries, saw a luminous track rising from the cell of the saint up to heaven, and at the same time heard a voice which said: Along this road did Benedict, the beloved of God, go up to heaven. We know not of another saint in whom was more visibly realized the guarantee of the one hundred-fold promised by the Savior to those who have left all things to follow Him. Through the grace of God he found,—

1st.—LIFE IN DEATH.

2d.—RICHES IN POVERTY.

3d.—GLORY IN THE MOST PROFOUND OBSCURITY.

1st Point. *Through the wonderful grace of God, Benedict finds life in death.* If he had left the world simply to escape the dangers which it offers to virtue, and to labor more surely for his perfection, he could have selected a less frightful desert, and used less rigorous mortifications; but here is a youth of fifteen, surrounded up to this time with all the cares that could possibly be bestowed upon childhood, who, without consulting any one but God, goes and shuts himself up in a cavern where he will have no company but that of wild animals, no other bed than the hard rock, no garment but a coarse hair cloth, nor hardly any other food but wild roots. Should we not infer from those providential preparations, that God is about to raise in His Church a wonder of sanctity, and to give him a most extraordinary supernatural life, instead of the corporal life which he sacrifices for love of Him?

But in fact what came to pass? The excessive austerities which would have destroyed his strength in a few days, did not only preserve and increase it, but men might have said with due proportion of this tomb in which he had buried himself alive, that which was said of the grave of the Lord: "The house of death becomes to him the house of life; the hollow of the rock is the womb of a miraculous mother, who, conceives a dead man, and brings forth one living."—(St. Pet. Chrys.) The courageous youth carries out the project of dying to everything and to himself, to live for God alone; and God returns to him with interest all that he has sacrificed for Him. Besides health, He grants him knowledge, and a knowledge much more precious than all the learning he could have obtained in all the academies of the world. He sets him up as the master of a nation of saints and of learned men. Who can think of the children of St. Benedict, and of their works, without admiring how much vigor there was in the root which brought forth such sprouts and produced fruits so marvellous!

What is it that detains us in our state of tepidity? It is nearly always the foolish idea that too much is to be given to God to deserve to be raised to the happy state of sanctity. We are afraid to be the losers in an exchange in which all is profit for us. . . . Understand it then, O my soul, that death leadeth to life; that the more thou disengagest thyself from human interests, the more thou deservest to be the recipient of heavenly benedictions.

2d Point. *St. Benedict finds riches in poverty.* He could, very reasonable, have promised to himself all that men seek in the enjoyment of wealth, the culture of the mind, and the exercise of power. These he renounced for love of Jesus Christ. But to reward him, our Savior treated him as He did the apostles and seemed to say to him as He said to them: "Come, My well-beloved poor Benedict, thou hast nothing and thou art, therefore, the better prepared to be enriched by My munificence. The more abundant the spring, the more empty should be the vessel which is taken to it to be filled."

He had despised his paternal inheritance, and wished, in imitation of the Savior, not to have whereupon to lay his head; and, therefore, the rich of the world will open their treasures to him; but as the apostles, when receiving of the early Christians the price of their fields, used it all for the relief of their brethren, so Benedict gives with one

hand what he receives with the other, and remains as poor himself as if he had received nothing. Let us see how God lavished spiritual blessings upon him.

St. Gregory said of St. Benedict that he was filled with the spirit of all the just, that is saying that the Lord united in his person the many gifts which He divides amongst the other saints, and it is wonderful indeed, that he came out of his cavern adorned with all that wealth of Divine grace, by a sort of new creation. Without having studied, he had knowledge ; without having learned theology, he was a doctor ; no other law had he read save the Gospel, and he was a legislator ; he had had no one to direct him, and was, nevertheless, an admirable guide. Grace gave him the spirit of government as it did to Moses ; the spirit of prophecy, as to Elias and Eliseus ; and the spirit of zeal, as to the apostles.

To become a more perfect servant of God, Benedict had rejected the power and dignities which he might claim on account of his high birth ; and behold Almighty God has invested him with an almost absolute authority over all creatures. To his voice the animals, the elements, nay the very demons are obedient ; the dead return to life at his command ; he performs miracles and communicates the same power to others. Ah, how good is the Master whom we serve. Let us place all our hopes and solicitude in Him, and in order that grace in us may have full liberty of action, let us adhere to nothing earthly, and divest ourselves of "the old man."

3d Point. *Miracle of grace in St. Benedict, who finds incomparable glory in the most profound obscurity.* Being full of contempt for himself, he thought he had so arranged matters that it was impossible for him to undertake anything remarkable in the order of human affairs ; but God chooses him to accomplish great and magnificent designs. The more he hides himself, the more does Providence make him known, and for all ages to come he shall be an object of veneration. He retires from the world, and the most distinguished persons of the world will call on him in his desert, and princes and bishops will consult him as an oracle. Respected by the great, beloved by the humble, he is feared by the very men who spread terror in every place ; remember the celebrated Totila at the feet of this humble monk. Nothing, however, made Benedict so glorious as the foundation of an

order which spread so rapidly in all parts of Europe, and has been so useful to the Church, by its writers, its apostles, its martyrs, and a long series of sovereign pontiffs and of holy bishops.[1]

Let us honor this illustrious master of the monastic and religious life. Whilst we invoke him, let us also ask the prayers of that countless multitude of saints, who, after him, reached the kingdom of glory by following the luminous way which he had traced out for them. Let us, after his example, and that of his disciples who are already crowned, build up the edifice of our sanctification upon four immovable columns : prayer, labor, mortification of the senses and silence.

1st Point. *Through a miracle of God's grace Benedict finds life in death.* The courageous youth executes the project of dying to everything and to himself, in order to live for God alone, and in exchange for the corporal life which he sacrifices, God gives him a supernatural and most wonderful life. Understand it, O thou, my soul, that God does not suffer to be surpassed in generosity ; that death it is which leadeth to life, and that the more thou wilt divest thyself of things human, the better thou shalt be clothed with things Divine.

2d Point. *By a miracle of grace Benedict finds riches in poverty.* Because he has rejected his paternal inheritance, and willed, after the Savior, to have no place whereupon to lay his head, the rich shall open their treasures for him. What of the spiritual blessings that were lavished upon him? He was filled with the spirit of all the just. Ah, how good is God whom we serve ! Let us cast all our solicitudes in His bosom.

3d Point. *Benedict finds glory in the midst of the most profound obscurity.* The more he hides himself, the more does Providence affect to make him known. He withdraws from the world, and the most distinguished persons in the world call on him in the desert. Nothing, however, was so glorious for this saint as the foundation of his order. Let us act as he did, and build up the edifice of our sanctification upon four columns : prayer, labor, silence and mortification of the senses.

1. In 1780, according to Godescard, the order of St. Benedict counted up 37,000 houses. Giving ten monks for each of them, it made up nearly 400,000 persons living under his rule.

LXXIX. MEDITATION.

MARCH 25th—THE ANNUNCIATION.

1st.—THE EMBASSY WHICH HEAVEN SENDS TO MARY.

2d.—HOW DOES THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN RECEIVE THIS HONOR?

3d.—ELEVATION OF SOUL SHE SHOWS FORTH IN THIS MYSTERY.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Let us go in spirit to the dwelling of the most holy virgin at Nazareth. Let us consider the poverty of her apartment, its dimensions, its furniture. Such is the temple wherein the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation will be wrought. Mary is at prayer.

SECOND PRELUDE.—For us, priests, who have such a large share in the glories of Mary, let us ask, through her intercession, to participate in her holy dispositions.

1st Point. *Heaven sends an embassy to Mary.* Solemnity, object, term of this embassy. The heavenly messenger is Gabriel, *the strength of God.* He comes from, and in the name of God. "*Sent from God.*" All heaven is intent upon the great event about to be accomplished; but it is of far greater interest for earth.—There is question of lifting up mankind, fallen through Adam, of reconciling God with men. The holy Trinity does not say to-day, as of old: "Let us make man to our likeness." It says: "Let us make God to the likeness of man, let us make the God-man, and let the immense ruin of guilty humanity be repaired by Him. Justice shone forth in the punishment of the rebellious angels; let mercy have its glorious manifestation in the salvation of men!" O wonder of love! O blessing unexpected! Will it ever be necessary to recall it to the remembrance of mortals? The person of the Word is about to deliver us from hell, to lift up our nature to the very throne of the Divinity! Which is the term of this embassy? Whither does the prince of heaven go? To whom, do you think, will he offer the most signal honor which God Himself can offer a creature? There were in those days, as there are in our own, noble princesses,

clothed in purple, covered with gold and precious stones. The Creator of the universe seeks in the world a spouse, a mother. He does not seek for her in palaces, nor amongst the grandeurs which dazzle the eye. Behold the realization of the word of the Prophet, when he represented God sitting upon the Cherubim, and at the same time beholding the depths.—(Dan. iii: 55.) It is in an abyss of humility and self-abasement that the most Holy Trinity looks upon, in order to choose a dwelling for God humble and annihilated.

O priests, in proportion only to your voluntary abasements will you draw upon yourselves the kind attentions of the Lord, and be found worthy to concur in the work of His mercy. "*The Lord is high above all nations. . . . He looketh down on the low things in heaven and in earth.*"—(Ps. cxii.)

An archangel then is sent! . . . to a virgin, who, in the opinion of men, was simply the wife of a poor tradesman, and who in her own estimation was less still, was in fact nothing. In her it is, and in her favor, that the Almighty will work the most wonderful of miracles. He does not send her Gabriel as the bearer of His behests; he is sent to ask her consent. He condescends to negotiate with Mary concerning a matter which might well have been the object of an absolute decree. How will she bear the weight of those glories so unforeseen and incomprehensible which Gabriel will announce to her?

2d Point. *Mary receives the heavenly messenger and the honor of Divine maternity.* Let us consider the words of the angel, and the answers of Mary, whom he salutes with so much respect. In the former we shall admire the most admirable graces which heaven can offer; in the latter we shall admire the greatest sanctity which ever appeared on earth.

"*The angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women!*"—What magnificent praise! Mary should believe it to be true, for it was from God she received this praise, from the lips of His ambassador. Blind as we are, full of miseries, perhaps separated from God by sin, and worthy of all kinds of maledictions, we readily believe every word which flatters us, regardless of the source that it may come from.—Mary is troubled because heaven bestows upon her praises which she deserves. "*Who*

having heard, was troubled at his saying," and I feel troubled and grieved if men neglect to give me praises which I do not deserve in the least. Her trouble was an indication of her humility ; but what does my trouble indicate but my pride? "*She thought within herself, what manner of salvation this might be.*" This was prudence truly admirable ; but as for me, I at once give way to a feeling of joy and satisfaction, if, in my vanity, I hear an expression of esteem addressed to me, though the same is often dictated by flattery. How foolish, and, betimes also, how dangerous !

The angel hastens to assure the humble virgin. "*Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God.*" Is there any reason to fear, when one has found grace with God? What subject of fear was there for this creature, beloved of God amongst all creatures, who now learns that she is predestined to be the mother of the most High; that her Son shall reign not only over the house of Jacob, but over the whole universe, and that His kingdom shall have no end?— Mary, however, is not yet free from all alarm. She is a virgin, and has willed to remain virgin. How shall the glories announced to her be conciliated with her sacred inviolable engagement? "*How shall this be done, for I know not man?*" In this question there is neither doubt nor diffidence. What the holy messenger will say, she believes in advance, "because no word shall be impossible with God." Mary's question is a sentiment which escapes her in a manner, a sudden expression of her extreme love for purity. O holy virgin, how pleasing to God was this disposition of thy heart, how comfortable to the designs that He had upon thee ! This was really the disposition which deserved for thee the most glorious of all elections. Gabriel explains to her the ineffable wonder. "*The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the virtue of the most High shall overshadow thee.*" Mary then gives her consent in a few words which reveal all her virtues, her faith, her humility, her obedience, her love of God ; her ardent desire to concur in the salvation of men, but principally her incomparable magnanimity. "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to Thy word.*"

3d Point. *Mary's magnanimity in the mystery of the annunciation.* This virtue of Mary appeared both in her readiness to refuse the honor of Divine maternity, and in the acceptation of the same.

According to Saints Ambrose, Augustin, Bernard and many others,

so great was the love of Mary for holy purity, that she would have preferred to remain what she was, if she could not have been at the same time, virgin and mother. *Angelus partum nuntiat; at illa virginitati inhœret; et integritatem angelicæ demonstrationi anteponendam judicat.*—(St. Greg. Nyss.)—She rightly thought that the grace which sanctifies and renders us agreeable to God, is to be in itself preferred to any favor which merely raises us in the esteem of men. This determination, however, supposed a very great elevation of mind, for she being more enlightened than the angels, could properly appreciate the value of what she was willing to sacrifice. O queen of purity, others will come after thee, and walk under the standard which thou hast raised! Their courage, is indeed to be praised; but who shall give due praise to thine! They will consent to remain virgins, in order to be the spouses of the Son of God; but thou, in order to remain a virgin, refusedst the honor of becoming His mother! . . . How great the magnanimity required to renounce Divine maternity! But in order to accept this honor, an equal elevation of mind was necessary.

Mary was not deceived as to the consequence of her acquiesence to the word of the angel. She knew that by giving her consent, she would sacrifice her rest, her life . . . nay, something infinitely greater, that is, the Son of God whose mother she was about to become. All the life of this so justly beloved Son, she had read in the prophets; His future immolation was equally known to her. In order to accept the overwhelming burden of afflictions which she foresaw, she had great need of an heroic courage. O virgin thou shalt be the mother of the most amiable of all children; but His very lovliness shall be the cause of thy sorrows. What happiness shalt thou be able to find in His presence? That presence will continually remind thee of His cross, of the ill treatments and the cruel torments of His passion. What a shudder would this thought bring upon thee! When I, therefore, hear thee saying: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to Thy word," I imagine that I hear Jesus in the garden of Olives, accepting the bitter chalice, sacrificing Himself for the love of His Father and of ourselves. Accepting the most incomprehensible of all honors, was, on thy part, offering to God the most generous of all sacrifices.

O Mary, where are my virtues when compared with thine, though my dignity is so much like thy own? I admire thy purity, thy magnan-

imity, thy sanctity ; and yet, I wonder with the Church how the Son of God condescended to take flesh in thy virginal womb. O my mother, grant to thy child, a little of that profound humility which thou acknowledgest to have been the cause of thy blessedness. "He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid. . . . All generations shall call me blessed." Yes ! my will is to lower, to annihilate myself more and more, in order to draw down upon me the regards and benedictions of the Lord. "*Who dwelleth on high, and looketh down upon the low things in heaven and in earth.*"

1st Point. *Heaven sends a messenger to Mary.* What is the object of it? To repair the great ruin of guilty humanity. Which is the term of it? To whom shall be offered the greatest honor which God Himself can offer? O my soul, if thou wilt attract the eye of God, and His benedictions down upon thee, do thou humble thyself.

2d Point. *Mary receives the heavenly message.* Let us consider the words of the angel, and the answers of the august virgin. "Hail, full of grace, etc." . . . . What truly magnificent praise ! God it was who addressed it to Mary through the mouth of an angel. She is troubled ; she thinks within herself. . . . What humility, what prudence !. . . . Gabriel imparts confidence. Why should she fear, having found grace with God ! He explains how the mystery shall be accomplished, and then Mary gives her consent. "Be it done to me according to Thy word."

3d Point. *Mary's magnanimity in the mystery of the annunciation.* This virtue of her's appears in her readiness to refuse and also in her willingness to accept the proffered honor.—She would have refused Divine maternity rather than to lose her virginity. In order to be spouses of the Word Incarnate others will consent to remain virgins ; and Mary, in order to remain a virgin, was ready to renounce the blessedness of becoming His mother !. . . . By accepting the honor of being the mother of God, Mary showed an equal elevation of soul. This God Incarnate shall have to atone for the sins of the world. Oh, many are the sufferings which Mary foresees both for the Son and for His mother ! Accepting the most sublime of dignities, was nothing less than accepting the most generous sacrifices.

LXXX. MEDITATION.

SAME DAY—THE AVE MARIA.

The angelical salutation contains two distinct parts : The first is a hymn of praise made up of the very words which the Holy Ghost placed on the lips of Gabriel and of St. Elizabeth, in honor of the blessed virgin ; the second is a short invocation added by the Church. Those two parts, taken together, contain an abridgment of our duties toward Mary, for the essence of those duties consists in honoring her as our queen, and invoking her as our mediatrix and mother. Faith, however, should vivify this salutation, and while reciting it, we should enter into the sentiments of the Holy Ghost and of the Church.

1st.—BY THE WORDS OF GABRIEL AND OF ELIZABETH, THE HOLY GHOST TEACHES US HOW TO HONOR MARY.

2d.—BY THE PRAYER THE CHURCH ADDED TO THEM, SHE TEACHES US TO INVOKE HER.

1st Point. *Let us learn of the Holy Ghost how to praise and honor Mary.* When we meditate on the words of the angel and of Saint Elizabeth, we discover therein an inexhaustible source of light and of pious sentiments.

I. *Ave Maria.* Let us remember first whom these homages are addressed to. What is the name of this venerated creature whom we greet with the archangel Gabriel? Next to the name of Jesus, is there on earth another name so sweet as this? How great thou art, O Mary, how merciful, how worthy of praise! "*O magna, O pia, O multum laudabilis, Maria! Tu nec nominari potes, quin accendas, nec cogitari quin recrees affectus diligentium te.*"

II. *Gratia plena.* Mary is full of grace and of beauty. Solomon had seen her coming forth as the *morning rising, beautiful as the moon, chosen*

as the sun. But those exterior graces are but a reflection of the beauty of her soul. "*All the beauty of the king's daughter is within.*" She is filled with heavenly gifts. *Full of grace.* To us grace is measured out, but it entered like a river into the Lord's tabernacle in order to sanctify it, and to make it the channel of all graces. Mary is full of grace, through the privilege of her immaculate conception, and of her perfect co-operation with all those which she ceased not to receive from that first moment. She has graces for herself, says St. Thomas, for us all also, and for all our miseries.

III. *Dominus tecum.* The Lord is with Mary. He assists and protects her, and communicates Himself to her spirit and to her heart with a plentitude proportioned to her merits and sublime dignity. He was with her in a manner quite ineffable, even before the incarnation ; but what shall we say of His presence in her, when, during nine months, He dwelt in her bosom more pure than the sun? O my God, am I less privileged than Thy mother, when I come down from the altar? Where art Thou, O Lord, at that precious moment? Does not my guardian angel say to me also: *Dominus tecum?* Alas, how quickly I forget it! Blessed mother, do thou assist me, pray for me and with me. When being about to contract with Jesus a union so intimate, I address to Him this request: *Et a te nunquam separari permittas.* Oh, may He be with me, with my mind to enlighten it, with my heart to inflame it with love ; may He always be with me, in my labors, in my intentions, in my trials . . . . that I may be always with thee, and with Him in His kingdom.

IV. *Benedicta tu in mulieribus.* Who will not bless Mary, either in heaven or on earth? Who will not bless her, not merely above all women, but above all the saints, above all the angels, above all creatures? Was there another chosen to be the mother of God? Was there another whose virginal child-bearing freed the children of all mothers from the malediction brought down by the first mother? Be thou blessed, therefore, O holy virgin, for that abundance of privileges and spiritual blessings which we admire in thee ; be thou blessed for that multitude of blessings thou pourest down upon us ; blessed be thou for the infinite dignity to which thou hast been raised by the Son of God, incarnate in thy womb ; be thou blessed for the immense glory wherewith thou art crowned in heaven! O pastor of souls, put those

praises of Mary on the still pure lips of your children; teach them to bless and to love her; you can do nothing more pleasing to heaven, nothing of greater advantage to your people and to yourself.

V. *Et benedictus fructus ventris tui Jesus.* Those words of Saint Elizabeth are, at the same time, a congratulation addressed to the blessed virgin, and a hymn in honor of Jesus Christ. Mary is nothing save through Jesus Christ, and in consideration of Jesus Christ. Her Divine maternity is the focus whence emanate the rays of glory which encircle her brow. The Son is, therefore, the end of all the honors bestowed upon the mother, as He is also the principle of them. To Him alone relates all the worship offered to the saints and to the queen of the saints: "*Beatæ Virginis honor et gloria laus et gratiarum actio est Redemptoris.*"—(St. Ild. Tol.) "*Totus honor impensus matri sine dubio redundat in gloriam filii.*"—(Rupert.) Mary accepts our praises solely in order to return them to Jesus Christ. If the priesthood is so dear to her heart, it is because through our ministry, Jesus, the fruit of her womb, is blessed at all times, and in every place.

2d Point. *Let us learn of the Church how we should invoke Mary.*

I. *Sancta Maria, mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus.*[1] Mary, mother of God. First motive of our confidence. She has upon Jesus all the claims that a mother has upon her son. What could He refuse her? From Him she has received a real omnipotence, not of command but of intercession: *Omnipotentia supplex.* Her credit has, therefore, no limits. But will she be willing to use it in our behalf? We simply answer, she is our mother. O Mary, the most tender of mothers, pray for children who have cost thee so many sorrows! We have still another title wherewith to secure thy compassion: O blessed mother, for we are sinners. Our misery is a claim upon thy mercy. Is there any misery greater than sin? If thou art the queen of mercy, it must be that the most miserable of sinners is the first of thy subjects: "*Tu regina misericordiæ, et ego miserrimus peccator subditorum maximus.*"—(St. Ber. in Salve.)

II. *Nunc, et in hora mortis nostræ.* This *now*, for which we implore the mercy and powerful intercession of Mary, is the present moment of our life. The past is ours no longer, and it has left for us

1. It is believed that this second part of the angelical salutation dates from the council of Ephesus, and that it was composed by St. Cyrille of Alexandria.

sins to be atoned for; the future does not belong to us; the present time is the only one we can use, and it escapes us very rapidly. Oh, how frail the duration of human existence on earth. But this moment, *nunc*, is the time of trials and battle, and many are the dangers which surround us; many the enemies bent upon our destruction! O Mary, who will save us if thou forsakest us? "*Sicut pulli, volantibus desuper milvis, ad gallinæ alas occurrunt, ita nos sub velamento alarum tuarum abscondimur. Nescimus aliud refugium nisi te: tu sola es unica spes nostra: tu sola unica patrona nostra, ad quam omnes aspicimus.*"—(St. Th. a Villanov.)

Do then, O holy virgin, pray for us *now*, for on this day, on this hour, on this moment, may depend our eternity! There is, however, an hour more critical still: this is the last hour which will decide our fate, the hour of darkness and anguish for even the holiest souls, the hour in which we may repair everything and lose everything. Then, especially, when our enemies will attack us more fiercely, we shall have need of a more powerful help. O Mary, at the hour of our death, *in hora mortis nostræ*, be nigh unto us, defend us, pray for us. . . . Blessed is he who expires within thy maternal arms, with his eyes turned toward thy image and thy blessed name on his lips. He quietly falls asleep on earth, and will wake up in heaven. . . . *Maria, mater, gratiæ, mater misericordiæ, tu nos ab hoste protege, et mortis hora suscipe.*[1]

1st Point. *Let us learn of the Holy Ghost how we should honor Mary. Ave Maria.* Is there, next to the name of Jesus, a name as sweet as the name of Mary, the name of this wonderful creature whom we greet with the heavenly Prince. *Gratia plena.* To us grace is measured out; it entered abundantly, even like a river, into the heart of Mary, the tabernacle of the most High. *Dominus tecum.* The Lord is with her, with a perfection proportionate to her merits. *Benedicta tu.* Who would refuse to bless Mary, both for the privileges she has received and for the mercies she pours down upon us? *Et benedictus*, etc. The Son is the term of all the honors which we render the mother.

1. Morientibus beata Virgo, non tantum succurrit, sed etiam occurrit.—(St. Hier., ep ii: ad Eustach.) Beata Virgo animas morientium suscipit.—(St. Vin Ferr.)

2d Point. *Let us learn of the Church how we should invoke Mary. Sancta Maria*, etc. Mary, mother of God, first motive of our confidence; there are no bounds to her credit, and she will use it in our behalf, for she is also our mother. Moreover, we are sinners. If she be the queen of mercy, it follows that the more miserable sinners are the first of her subjects. *Nunc et in hora*, etc. This *now*, is the present life, the time of trials and of battle. But how much more necessary still, will her intercession be at the hour of our death, an hour on which our eternity will depend?

LXXXI. MEDITATION.

MAY 1st.—THE MONTH OF MAY OF THE GOOD PASTOR.

1st.—FOR THE GOOD PASTOR THE MONTH OF MAY IS FULL OF HOPES.

2d—WHAT SHOULD HE DO IN ORDER TO REALIZE THEM.

1st Point. *The month of May is, for the good pastor, a month full of hopes.* Easter time is over; the month of May, with its sweet exercises, well liked by all, will continue the religious movement imparted to the parish. For the faithful sheep, and for those which strayed away and have already returned to the fold, it will be a month of thanksgiving and of perseverance; for the sinners who have not yet complied with their most important duty, it will be a new occasion of conversion. Devotion toward the mother most amiable, principally when practiced with the attractive forms which it displays during this beautiful month, acts quite powerfully on the most indifferent and furthest separated from God. Many are seen every year, who failed to harken to the word of God, or, perhaps, refused contemptuously to hear it, drawn as by a secret force toward the altar of Mary, and finally, yielded to the grace which accompanies the singing of sweet melodies, the simple ceremonies and the paternal exhortations of the month of Mary. No one can love the blessed virgin, and remain a long time an enemy of her Divine Son. Who can but love her, in witnessing the joy which her blessings

inspire, when everything speaks of her mercy toward those who were the least worthy of it? Will the sinners for whom she will pray, remain impenitent, or will she refuse to pray when solicited to do so by the souls which are the most dear to her, whose only ambition is to procure for her a great number of devout clients?

St. Epiphanius says, that the Incarnate Word is the spiritual brook in which the elect are caught, and that Mary is the bait which serves to catch them. *Ave, esca spiritalis hami; in te siquidem hamus divinitas.* —(De. laud. Deip.) Never do the fishers of men cast the net of the word of God with greater efficacy than when they exhort men to invoke the mother of the Redeemer. When does the good priest preach more impressively than when he recounts the mercies of Mary? Mary has taken us from the world, prepared us for the priesthood, offered us to the Lord on the day of our ordination; would we be good priests, if, next to God, she were not the first and sweetest object of our love? During the month of May many festivals will occur which will help you in your works of pastoral zeal. It may be that during this month you shall have the first communion of your children. Ah, great shall be your credit with the queen of angels, when you will present to her the souls of these children, all purified in the blood of Jesus, and radiant with the splendors of His grace. Enter with confidence into a career where everything promises consolations to your apostolic labors.

2d Point. *What does the good priest do, to realize the hopes he has conceived at the recurrence of this month?* He invites his parishioners to come to Mary's shrine; he speaks to them of Mary, he renews with them his consecration to Mary.

I. Evening reunions around Mary's altar, decorated with great care, is the capital point; if you can make them numerous and edifying, this first success will secure others for you. Make use of every means in order to attain this end. The industrious, intelligent priest, studies the tastes of the people, uses variety in the means . . . . the great affair is to have the people attend during the month of May and to have them well pleased, when they hear the bell calling for their presence.

II. Simple melodies, well executed, prepare the soul to receive wholesome impressions, but the exhortation is the essential ex-

ercise.[1] Let this exhortation be short, in keeping with the character of your hearers; prepare it more by prayer than by study; and let it be the language of the heart; you may then expect that it will yield much precious fruit, provided you apply yourself constantly to give prominence to the power and goodness of Mary; and still more to her goodness than to her power. As soon as the sinner loves to hear of the miracles of grace obtained through her mercy, you may say that his conversion is begun; it is far advanced when he has begun to implore her and to venerate her. In regard to this matter, we cannot too often meditate upon the teaching of the doctors, and the practices of the saints.

St. John Chrysostom says to the mother of God, that she has been predestined for this incomparable dignity in order to save, by her tender compassion, those whom the justice of her Son could not save. Let us hear St. Bernard: *Peccatorem quantumcumque fœtidum non horres, non despicis, si ad te suspiraverit, tuumque interventum pœnitenti corde flagitaverit. Tu illum desperationis barathro pia manu retrahis, spei medicamen aspiras, ac toti mundo despectum materno affectu amplecteris, foves nec deseris quousque judici miserum reconcilies*—(Apud. S. Bonav. Specul. B. M. V.)

Father Segneri never gave a mission without preaching on the mercy of Mary. This was the subject he loved best. St. Liguori adopted the same practice. After quoting the words of the blessed virgin to St. Bridget, "as the loadstone attracts iron, so do I attract the most hardened souls," the holy bishop adds: "This is a miracle of grace which is renewed every day in our missions. . . . Hardened sinners, whom no other sermon could touch, are moved to sorrow and confidence and return to God, when they hear us proclaim the mercies of Mary." The reason of this is given by another saint: *Laudamus humilitatem, miramur virginitatem; sed misericordia miseris sapit dulicus; misericordiam amplectimur carius, recordamur sæpius, crebrius invocamus.*—(St. Bern. Sen.) Mercy indeed supposes neither merits or rights in him who is the object of it; it only supposes miseries, and the greater they are, the more they excite compassion.

1. Many good priests are satisfied with one or two exhortations in the week, and on the other days they read out of a book. It is very desirable that the priest speak as often as possible.

III. The last day of May has come; the queen of heaven sees her children engaged in crowning the daily homages offered her hitherto, by a still more solemn demonstration. For the proper closing of the exercises, the good priest uses all the resources of his zeal. In the morning there was at the holy table, a large number of devout communicants; the re-union in the evening will surpass all the others in interest, for it shall be, as it were, the farewell of children to their mother. The good pastor will address his hearers with unusual fervor; will consecrate them and himself anew to the holy virgin, and confide to her maternal care a flock which has become still dearer to her. . . . This ceremony well performed will produce lasting impressions; will preserve and multiply the spiritual favors received during the month of May.

1st Point. *For the good priest, the month of May is a month full of hopes.* I. The time is favorable. II. Devotion to the blessed virgin, has powerful attractions even for great sinners. Mary is called *esca spiritalis hami.* The good priest never preaches with greater impressiveness than when he preaches about the mercies of Mary. He has so often had an experience of the same.

2d Point. *What does the good priest do to turn the month of May to advantage?* I. He uses every means to obtain numerous reunions. He neglects nothing, neither singing nor decorations in order to make them interesting. II. The essential part of the devotion is the exhortation. Let it be short and adapted to the character of the congregation; let it be the language of the heart. Bring out in relief the goodness and power of the blessed virgin; and praise particularly her compassion. *Laudamus humilitatem, miramur virginitatem; sed misericordia miseris sapit dulcius.* III. The good pastor for the closing of the exercises, displays all the resources of his zeal; fervent general communion; solemn consecration of the shepherd and of his flock to the great Shepherdess.

LXXXII. MEDITATION.

MAY 3d—THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS CONSIDERED WITH REGARD TO OURSELVES AND OUR OWN SANCTIFICATION.

1st.—BY MEDITATING ON IT WE SECURE TO OURSELVES THE FRIENDSHIP OF GOD.

2d.—MEDITATING ON THE PASSION SECURES TO GOD THE AFFECTIONS OF OUR HEARTS.

1st Point. *Meditation on the sufferings of Jesus Christ secures for us the friendship of God*, for this practice is most pleasing to Him. This mystery is the great object of the thoughts of God. Everything is full of it in the Old Testament. Nothing was there so minutely predicted as the passion of the Messiah. Isaias, Jeremias and David do more than announce it, they relate it, as the evangelists do. Isaac, Joseph, the brazen serpent, the paschal lamb, were touching figures of Jesus Christ sacrificed by His Father, Himself carrying up the mountain the wood for the immolation; sold by one of those whom He called brethren, raised upon the cross and healing the wounds caused by sin; in all this we find an image of the Lamb of God, whose blood preserves us from the sword of the destroying angel.

God is evidently gratified by this reparation offered to His glory. His heart is in the sacrifice of Calvary, and bids ours go thither. He loves to see us measure in this victim, which is His Son, the length, the width, the sublimity, the depth of His charity toward us. But how much gratified is Jesus Christ Himself, when we meditate on the mystery of His death. It had been the constant object of His desires. He had no other object in coming on earth, save to redeem us in suffering and dying for us on the cross. He lived, He breathed, only for the cross. He compares His death with a baptism of blood which shall wash away all our crimes: "*And how He is straitened until it is ac-*

complished."—(Luc. xii : 50.) At the approach of this blessed moment He can contain Himself no longer; this flame of sacred fire must escape from His heart. "*With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer.*" On the cross He realized in the most complete manner that which the angels had promised in His name on the day of His birth. *Glory be to God . . . peace to men.*

God honored as much as He deserves to be; man preserved from the most horrible of all calamities, lifted up to the rank of child of God, and associated to His sovereign felicity. . . . Such are the results of Christ's death. Is it not in reality the tree of life? But, will it be life for us, if we neglect to nourish our souls with its sacred lessons?

To entertain within us a devout remembrance of His passion, Jesus Christ not only inspires His Church to place the cross everywhere before our eyes, to engrave the image of His death on wood, on stone, on marble, on gold and on silver, but He offers Himself in the sacrifice of our altars, which is the vivid representation and continuation of the sacrifice of Calvary; and in His own glorified body, concealed under humble appearances. He gives us a perpetual memorial of that passion so sorrowful for Him, and so beneficial for us: *Unde et memores . . . tam beatæ passionis.*

When, in the celebration of the mysteries, we pronounce those words, we obey the touching recommendation He addressed to His apostles on the eve of His death: *Do this in commemoration of Me*, a recommendation which He renewed a moment ago: "*As often as ye do these things, ye shall do them in remembrance of Me.*" This was as much as to say: "Forget not a God who dies in order to save you. In My agonies and My torments, I thought of you; think you of Me now, at least, when I make Myself present on the altar, to remind you of My death, and to apply its merits to your soul." Wilt thou, O my soul, refuse that consolation to thy God? Wouldst thou neglect a means so certain to gain His affection?

2d Point. *Meditating on the sufferings of Jesus Christ, secures the affections of our hearts to God.* He who finds all good in Himself, condescends to ask us to give Him a heart which He Himself gave us. "*Son, give Me thy heart.*" This is admirable condescendence. But of all the motives which urge us to love God, the most powerful is the sight and influence of the cross.

Love is repaid by love only. The mystery of the cross is the great excess of God's love for us. If He had left it to our choice to ask for a token of this great love for man, would any one have dared ask Him to give us the incarnation, and especially the death of His Son? His goodness anticipated our desires and infinitely surpassed our hopes. Hear Him say to us, "O men, what shall you do to bind anew those bonds of charity which united you to your Creator and Father, and which you have so shamefully broken asunder by offending Him? To obtain this end, you have no adequate means in your power; listen, however, and comprehend, if you can, the love I bear you. I have one only Son, eternally begotten from My substance; He is like Myself; take you this well-beloved Son; to you I give Him, if He will consent; I Myself consent to Have Him annihilate Himself to expiate your pride, to have Him die to save you." "*God has so loved the world*," the world of ungrateful sinners, defiled by all sorts of crimes, for there was no other world when God gave us His Son.

And this Son, in all things equal to the Father, did not shrink from drinking the bitter cup. He saw at one glance all the series of unheard of reproaches and sorrows He would have to suffer for us; but nothing could conquer His determination. He went to meet the blows of God's terrible justice. "Behold, I come, O My Father; I come to offer to Thee all the reparation due to Thy majesty, and which could not be found in the imperfect sacrifices of the old law. I, the penitent of all mankind, constitute Myself Thy victim; impose upon Me the weight of all Thy vengeances; strike Thy Son, but spare man." O garden of Olives, O pretorium and Calvary, how eloquently you speak to us of the love of Jesus for us! Ah, it is time "*That they who live, may cease to live to themselves, but unto Him who redeemed them by His blood.*"—(II. Cor. v: 15.) What other new blessings do we expect before we give ourselves to God?

We know with what heavenly fire the remembrance of Jesus Christ's sufferings inflamed the hearts of the saints. Looking unto the cross, St. Magdalen de Pazzi exclaims: "O love, O love, how little thou art known, how little thou art loved! O souls, created by Jesus' love, and for Jesus' love, why love you not this love?" St. Francis of Assissi, grieved at the hard-heartedness of men, besought the rocks to weep with him over the death of the Son of God. St. Bonaventure

said that the sight of the sores of Christ, sufficed to wound hearts of stone, to inflame souls as cold as ice, and to cause the melting of bowels harder than adamant.

Cross of Jesus, blood of my God, which give me to understand all the strength of His love, how strongly you reproach me for the weakness of mine toward Him? Does he love a crucified God, who, in everything, seeks to enjoy a commodious life and flees from all sufferings? Does he love a God humbled, spit upon . . . . who is desirous of honor, and fears the very appearance of contempt? Achieve Thy conquest, O Lord; come forth in Thy beauty, in Thy beauty imparted to Thee by the outrages and wounds that Thou hast suffered; submit to Thy power all that is in me, all that depends upon me.—(Ps. xliv: 5.) Secure to Thyself a heart ready to turn away from Thee at the very moment that it openly declares its fidelity.

The hour for ascending the altar is about to strike. On this day at least I shall stand on it with my soul solely occupied with the remembrance of my Savior's passion. Come, O dying Jesus, teach me to die to everything that displeases Thee. I will love a God whose cross has opened heaven for me, whose blood has washed away my iniquities, whose death restored me to life, whose merits entitle me to the hope of loving Him eternally: *Super omnia te mihi amabilem reddit, O bone Jesu, calix quem bibisti, opus nostræ redemptionis. Hoc enim omnino amorem nostrum sibi vindicat, hoc devotionem nostram blandius allicit, justius exigit.*"—(St. Bern.)

1st Point. *Meditating on the sufferings of Jesus Christ secures for us the friendship of God.* All is full of this mystery, even in the Old Testament, and much more so in the New. We see that it was the great object of the thoughts of God. The Lord finds complacency in this admirable reparation made against His outraged glory. His heart is on Calvary and calls ours thither also. We never please Jesus Christ so much as when we meditate on the excess of His love, on the mystery of His death; knowing this, the Church places the cross everywhere before our eyes. For this purpose also does the Savior offer Himself in the sacrifice of our altars, which is a vivid representation of the sacri-

fice of Calvary. "*Do this in commemoration of Me.*" Forget not a God who loves you so much as to die for you ; and you shall love Him. Wilt thou, O my soul, neglect so propitious a means to gain the affection of thy Judge?

2d Point. *Meditation on the passion of Jesus Christ secures to God the affections of our hearts.* I love him who loves Me. It was on the cross that the love of Jesus Christ for us reached its furthest limits. We know with what heavenly fire the remembrance of the passion filled the souls of the saints.

SECTION THREE.

FROM PENTECOST TO ADVENT.

PROPER OF THE SEASON.

LXXXIII. MEDITATION.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

1st—THE GOOD PRIEST HONORS THE MYSTERY OF THE BLESSED TRINITY.
2d—HE ENDEAVORS TO HAVE IT HONORED BY OTHERS.

1st Point. *The good priest honors the mystery of the Blessed Trinity.* Offering to it the three-fold homage of his mind, of his heart and of his imitation.

I. He offers to the Holy Trinity the homage of his mind. He submits his intelligence to the dictates of faith. Is there anything more reasonable? He has the declaration of the Son of God who is in the bosom of the Father.—(J. i : 18.) Can he wish for any other motive to induce him to believe what is most inaccessible to the human intellect? He rejoices in sacrificing to God the most noble part of his nature and to say to Him : "I believe, O my God, all that thou has revealed concerning this profound mystery ; my reason rebels, but I sacrifice my reason to Thy glory. I willingly acknowledge my ignorance, to honor Thy sovereign wisdom, and with one of Thy servants, I exclaim : "*God is great exceeding our knowledge.*"—(Job. xxxvi : 26.) To search this mystery would, in me, be temerity ; to admit it on Thy word, shows forth my devotion ; but to know it fully, to see it face to face, will be my happiness in eternity.

II. Homage of the heart. This mystery which requires so many sacrifices of our mind, is full of consolation to the heart. The good priest finds ineffable sweetness in considering all the Divine blessings in their very beginning. He sees in the Blessed Trinity the creation, the incarnation, the Church, the sacraments, all the personal favors which he receives. He is overcome with joy when he hears each person of the Trinity saying to him : "*I loved thee in perpetual charity.*"

The Church, very wisely, on this festival day, leads up to the spring of which she showed us the different streams during the different festivals of the liturgical year. She speaks to us of that immense ocean whence flow all the blessings which are imparted to us. She wishes to be grateful to the adorable Trinity, which, finding all its happiness in itself, is ever occupied about our own ; for, says St. Paul, God chose us before the foundation of the world. "The Father chose us for His children, The Son for His brethren, and the Holy Ghost chose us that He might show forth in us the riches of His grace."

The Church on this account reminds us continually of the Holy Trinity. At the begining, in the middle, and at the end of her offices ; in the prayers she addresses to God, she ceases not to express her faith in the Father, in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost. All her psalms, her hymns and canticles, she concludes by returning glory to the Holy Trinity. She wants her ministers to repeat a hundred times a day, the *glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost,* so strong is her conviction that she cannot address to God a praise more pleasing to Him, a prayer more suited to draw down upon us all the gifts of His grace. The good priest loves to repeat this doxology ; and we read of solitaries who had no other exercises of piety than this one.

III. Homage of imitation. In this mystery we adore the unity of nature and the trinity of persons ; a pious priest endeavors to honor the unity by sincerely loving and being united to all men ; he honors the Trinity by communication, doing to others all possible good.

It is certain that one of the ends of the incarnation was to form on earth an image of the unity which is in God, for this is one of the special graces which Jesus asked for His disciples on the eve of His passion : "*That they may be one, as we also are one.*" O priest of God, will you not become thoroughly imbued with that solicitude, which St. Paul wished to see in all Christians, but which is still more necessary for

those who are their models and guides? "*Careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace.*"—(Ep. iv : 3.) As the Trinity, however, in God subsists by ineffable communications, the Father pouring out all the treasures of its essence into the bosom of the Son ; the Father and the Son giving all their divinity to the Holy Ghost ; so should we make our union perfect, by making it fruitful through works of charity. Upon us, ministers of God, innumerable favors are lavished, but this is less for us than for others. The more we shall be zealous for their sanctification, the more will the Almighty show Himself generous toward us. "*Give, and it shall be given to you.*" Listen, this very day, to your Savior, exhorting you to practice fraternal charity; for, in the Gospel read at the end of Mass, you find these words : "*Be ye merciful, as your Father is merciful.*"

2d Point. *The good priest procures honor for the mystery of the Blessed Trinity,* by carefully and assiduously teaching the faithful concerning this fundamental point of our faith, and by conclusions drawn suitable to our piety.

I. St. Jerome admires how wisely Jesus Christ commanded the apostles, first, to teach the doctrines of faith, and next to confer the sacrament which gave it : "*Ordo præcipuus : jussit apostolis ut primum docerent universas gentes, deinde fidei intingerent sacramento.*"—(Comm. in Mat. i, 4.) It is to be feared that, even in Catholic countries, there may be many souls ignorant of the way of salvation, because they do not sufficiently know this all-important one of our mysteries. May there not be some who represent to themselves the three Divine persons as three human persons? Pastors should give frequent instructions on this great object of our faith ; in their instructions, however, they should use language consecrated by the Church. This truth is necessarily surrounded with obscurity : seek not to explain it as if you wanted the mystery to disappear.

Whenever we give instructions on this subject, let us declare distinctly that there is nothing so impenetrable to the human mind, yet at the same time, so evident to the eye of faith. Let us, with a holy doctor, be consoled for not understanding what God does not wish us to understand. "The arch-angels, with all their light, cannot penetrate the depth of this doctrine ; the angels themselves have not learned it ; the most enlightened ages did not suspect it ; the prophets had but a

confused knowledge of it; the explanation of it the great apostle never asked, neither did our Lord Jesus Christ ever give it; let us not complain of our ignorance."—(St. Hilary.)

II. Whilst instructing the minds, let us excite the hearts to devotion. A good priest teaches the faithful that in the Church all spiritual gifts are distributed in the name of the Holy Trinity; it is in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost that they are regenerated in baptism, and strengthened in grace by confirmation; in that name they receive the pardon of their sins, the blessings of the priests, all the hope of religion. The good priest tells his people how to sanctify their labors and all their actions by beginning them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. . . . He points out to them that Holy Trinity, not in heaven and in our churches only, but in every place and within themselves; he inspires them with respect for its holy presence.

Recollect yourself at this very moment in presence of the Supreme Majesty. Ask yourself, have you honored, and induced others to honor this mystery? Did you speak of it often enough? Did you not consider as foreign to the subject of morals, a dogma which is the foundation of all Christian morality, since it is the principle of that charity by which we are united to God and to our brethren? Consecrate anew to the three Divine persons the three faculties of your soul: the memory to the Father, the intellect to the Son, the will to the Holy Ghost. O Jesus, by whom we belong more especially to the Blessed Trinity, since Thou hast marked us with its seal, by imprinting in our souls the sacred characters of baptism, and of priestly consecration, vouchsafe to associate us to the perpetual homages Thou offerest to it in heaven and in our tabernacles! Grant to Thy priests to lead a life so perfect, that it may be a continual praise, and an every-day preparation to the eternal praise of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost: *Benedicamus Patrem et Filium cum Sancto Spiritu; laudemus et super exaltemus eum in sæcula. Amen.*

1st Point. *A good priest honors the mystery of the most Holy Trinity.* I. He pays it the homage of his mind, by faith. His faith in this mystery is the more glorious to God from the fact that it demands of

his reason a greater sacrifice. O my God, I love to acknowledge my ignorance, to honor Thy infinite knowledge; *Scrutari temeritas, credere pietas, nosse æterna felicitas.* II. He offers the Holy Trinity the homage of his heart by hoping and loving. He loves to contemplate in this mystery the source of all Divine blessings. He is filled with joy when he hears each of the three persons saying to him: *I have loved thee in perpetual charity.* III. He offers to it the homage of his imitation. In this mystery he adores the unity of nature and the trinity of persons. The good priest endeavors to honor the unity by sincerely loving and being united to all men. He honors the Trinity by communication, doing unto others all the good that it is in his power to do.

2d Point. *A good priest procures honor for the mystery of the Blessed Trinity*, by carefully and assiduously teaching the faithful, concerning this fundamental point, and by lessons accruing to their piety. No other part of the Catholic doctrine needs to be inculcated with greater care, and treated with greater prudence. A good priest also uses this mystery as a means to lead his people to the practice of a pious life.

LXXXIV. MEDITATION.

FEAST OF THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OR *Corpus Christi.*

1st.—WHY HAS THE CHURCH ESTABLISHED IT?

2d.—WHAT SHOULD THE PRIEST DO ON THIS SOLEMNITY?

1st Point. *Object of the Church in establishing this solemnity of the blessed sacrament.* In this *memorial of Divine wonders* our mind is chiefly taken up with the sight of the humiliations of the Son of God; our hearts, however, should be particularly touched with the love which Jesus Christ shows us in the Eucharist. . . . But alas, we often respond to His blessings by ingratitude, and to the humiliations which He chose to suffer, we add negligences, not to say insults. Now the Church, impressed with the remembrance of these two classes of

offences, endeavors on this day to make us honor the voluntary humiliations of our Savior by our grateful love, and to make us atone for our own indifference by a loving repentance.

I. In no other of His mysteries is our Lord Jesus Christ so much debased as in the Eucharist. In every other mystery or circumstance of His life, if His divinity be partly concealed for a time it soon reveals itself in some way; even on Calvary, amidst the insults which they heaped upon Him, they can perceive in Him the Son of God. "*Indeed this man was the Son of God.*"—(Marc. xv: 39.) But in the Eucharist, far from appearing to be God, He does not even show one trait of resemblance with man. He performs, however, miracles in the holy Eucharist. St. Thomas calls this mystery: "*Maximum miraculum Christi.*"—(Opus. 57.) But whilst the prodigies which shone forth at His birth, during His life and at His death, were destined to manifest His grandeurs, the miracles which He multiplies in the Eucharist are used only to surround Him with incomprehensible mystery. Ah, if we feel awed by those humiliations, how much should we not be touched by the love which brought them about?

Incomprehensible as these sufferings are, the Savior had to take them upon Himself to realize the designs of His generous tenderness for man. He desired to dwell amongst us, to induce a full understanding of His most tender friendship; He desired to renew continually His immolation and in a manner to identify Himself with us by giving His flesh to be our food and His blood to be our drink. "*My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.*" Now each of these favors, and in particular the one mentioned last, made it necessary for Him to descend into this abyss of humility in which we can recognize Him. "Because this mystery," says St. Bernard, "is the love of loves; it was also the sacrifice of sacrifices." Consider well, then, the lesson we should learn.

The more the Son of God in the Eucharist lowered for us His infinite greatness, the more we are bound to exalt it by our homages. The Church has done this by instituting a feast which is the triumph of Jesus Christ annihilated in the holy sacrament. This is a public triumph; not in His churches only is He adored to-day; He is borne with solemnity through the midst of His people; every knee bows down in His presence. This triumph is universal. Go to whichever nation you

choose, there you will see the children of the Church prostrate before the Savior present in the holy Eucharist. It is a wonderful triumph, owing to the pomp of the ceremonies, to the devotion and joy of the faithful. Hence it is that our grateful love glorifies Jesus Christ for the deep humiliations which He sought, in order to draw near, and unite Himself to us. Such was the first object of the Church in the institution of this festival. Here is the second motive of that institution:

II. To the voluntary humiliations of the Savior in this mystery, men add mortifications, others opposed to His desires; to humiliations which appease the anger of heaven, they add humiliations which excite its wrath; and hence to manifestations of gratitude we must add expressions of penitence:

Three objects strike our eyes in our sanctuaries, each of which speaks most eloquently of the excessive love of Jesus Christ, and of the ingratitude wherewith we repay His most generous blessings. We have there the tabernacle, wherein He dwells; the altar on which He renews His immolation; the holy table on which He is the living bread of His disciples. Not to mention the sacrilegious outrages of heresy and impiety, is there any of these three Divine monuments that does not remind us of Jesus Christ cruelly abandoned and more cruelly insulted?

Where is the eagerness of the faithful to honor His presence by visiting Him? to honor His sacrifice by their assistance? to honor His heavenly banquet by their participation? They care not for the favors of a God. They are eager to please men, full of attentions toward those whose services they may need; but it would seem as if Jesus alone deserved no regard, that from Him alone nothing is either to be hoped for or feared. . . . Is not there much tepidity in the visits to the blessed sacrament, and in the so-called honors which are paid to it, amongst the very Christians who pretend to have some devotion toward it? After a few moments passed in His presence, they give way to weariness. In another place they would strive to conquer their sloth; but this is too much when we are in the company of the Lord of heaven, and according to the energetic saying of Tertullian: *Solius Dei impatientes sumus.* Thou, however, O Jesus, dost patiently bear this criminal impatience, and with ineffable mercy Thou abidest with hearts which, through contempt and disgust, cannot abide with Thee.

Did the Jews deserve as much as we do the reproach which Thou addressedst to them? "*O unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you.*"—(Mat. xvii: 16.)

This, however, is the least of our offences against our God of the Eucharist. We are not satisfied with forgetting Him, leaving Him alone, we positively hurt His feelings. Who will tell of the irreverences, of the sacrileges and profanations committed against Him at this present time and during eighteen hundred years before this day? *Cor Jesu, etiam nunc ab ingratis hominibus in sanctissimo amoris sacramento dilaceratum, miserere nobis!* Such is the language used by fervent souls in their sorrow; but this solitary reparation does not suffice; the Church wishes to have a solemn reparation; and, therefore, she intends this feast to be not solely an ovation decreed to her Divine spouse, but also a solemn act of penance on the part of her children. Well knowing that the most frightful retributions await those who have *trodden under their feet the Son of God and deemed His blood unclean*, she makes use of this extraordinary display to renew our faith, causes, as it were, this holy dreadful majesty to appear before us to induce us to appease His anger by humbling ourselves in His presence. She invites us to unite our acts of homage to hers, and our tears to her tears.

2d Point. *What should the priest do to enter into the spirit of this solemnity?* The love of the Eucharist should be the first of his devotions, since this mystery is the great glory of his priesthood, and the most abundant source of the consolations which he experiences. He, therefore, zealously avails himself of the occasion which is offered to-day, to honor the blessed sacrament, and to promote its honor. Why can he not draw all men with him to the feet of a God who loves men so tenderly? He uses every exertion on the recurrence of this feast, to encourage the faithful to contribute to the exterior beauty of the triumph of Jesus Christ. He carefully instructs his parishioners concerning the object and meaning of this ceremony; and when he will carry the Divine heavenly King in the midst of them, their faith will be reanimated at the sight of the imposing pageant. They will imagine seeing the Savior going through towns and villages as of yore, casting out devils, healing the sick . . . . they will beseech Him to bless their houses, their projects, their labors, and it will be justly said of Him

once more, that He spent His life in doing good. That, however, which principally draws the grace of God on the flock, is the prayer of the pastor, and that which rejoices the angels, and edifies the faithful is his modesty, his profound recollection in the exercise of so holy a function. "*We are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men.*"—(I. Cor. iv : 9.)

To solemn expressions of adoration and praise, the good priest adds reparation for the insults offered to Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. We are, too little grieved at the sight and remembrance of these insults. It is true that the humanity of the Son of God, having entered into glory, He cannot suffer from the boldness and wickedness of men, as during His mortal life ; but is this a reason why we should not be grieved at the insults and profanations of which He is the object? "Consider well what I say : The body of the Savior does, most certainly, suffer much more from us in the Eucharist, than it did from the Jews during His passion ; for then it only suffered for a time ; here it is exposed to suffer to the end of ages ; in His passion it suffered as much only as Jesus Christ allowed, and because He consented ; but here it suffers, as it were, through force and violence. It suffered during His passion, but it was then in the state of a nature liable to suffer and to die; but in the Eucharist, it suffers by being in the very state of immortality. The corporal sufferings of Christ on earth were glorious to God and useful to men ; but what He suffers in this mystery is injurious to God and injurious to men."—(Bourdaloue.) Let us renew the resolution so often taken, to be more zealous in honoring the blessed sacrament : *Tantum ergo sacramentum veneremur cernui.—Jesu, quem velatum nunc aspicio, oro, fiat illud quod tam sitio, ut te revelata cernens facie, visu sim beatus tuæ gloriæ!*

1st Point. *Object of the Church in establishing the feast of Corpus Christi.* It was to honor the humiliations to which our Lord voluntarily submitted Himself in the holy Eucharist ; make amends for those which He suffers from the ingratitude of men. In no one of His other mysteries did the Savior humble Himself so deeply, and these humiliations were necessary for the accomplishment of His designs of mercy toward us. The more He lowers for our sake His infinite greatness,

the more we should exalt it by our acts of homage. Such is the motive of this public, universal, glorious triumph decreed to Him by the Church. But to those voluntary humiliations, prompted by His love, we have ungratefully added outrages and profanations. In His tabernacle, on His altar, at His table, I see Him cruelly abandoned and even insulted. What a subject of grief and tears for a good priest!

2d Point. *What should I do to enter into the spirit of this solemnity?* Avail myself eagerly of this solemnity, to honor and to promote His honor, contribute to the glory of His triumph, rejoice over the acts of homage He receives, strive to repair the outrages offered to Him, instruct my people carefully concerning the nature of this feast, renew the resolution to be more zealous in honoring this great sacrament: *Tantum ergo sacramentum, veneremur cernui.*

LXXXV. MEDITATION.

PREPARATION FOR MASS.

1st.—IT IS NECESSARY.

2d.—JESUS BY HIS EXAMPLE TEACHES US HOW TO PREPARE FOR MASS.

1st Point. *Preparation for Mass is necessary.* This point is well understood by every priest who knows the excellency of the ministry which he performs at the altar. . . . "If we must needs confess that no other work can be performed by the faithful, so holy and Divine as this tremendous mystery itself, wherein that life-giving victim, by which we were reconciled to the Father, is daily immolated on the altar by priests; it is also sufficiently clear, that the utmost care and even scrupulousness should be used, that it be performed with the greatest possible inward cleanness and purity of heart, and outward show of devotion and piety."—(Counc. Trent, sec. xxii.) This means that we ought to prepare. If you enter abruptly upon this angelical function, not taking time to recollect your mind, and purify your heart, and this at the very moment that you are about presenting yourself before the throne

of God, in the name and in the interests of all creatures, will you not be guilty of grievous irreverence, will you not change the most salutary and sanctifying of all functions into an occasion of sin and of death?

In the mysteries of the holy altar there is nothing to affect the senses. If, before the celebration, I do not wake up in me this living faith which pierces the cloud, I shall soon dishonor them by my tepidity; and expose myself to the dreadful evil of profaning them. O priest, often meditate on, and fill your mind with, the reflections of a pious and learned cardinal.

Pauci sunt qui admirabiles hujus sacri convivii in se sentiant effectus, quia pauci sunt qui se ad illos recipiendos rite disponant, qui serio cogitent se ad Sancta sanctorum accedere, adaltare Dei, ad Deum ipsum. Ideo multi sunt imfirmi et imbecilles, et dormiunt multi. Mortem olim summo sacerdoti minabatur Deus, si ausus fuiiset introire in Sancta sanctorum sine strepitu tintinnabulorum, non radians gemmis, non fulgens auro, omnium virtutum varietate circumamictus: quam ergo pœnam merebitur novæ legis sacerdos, qui non ad arcam typicam, sed ad Deum ipsum accedit, ut Filium ejus Dominum Jesum Christum immolet, tangat, comedat, nisi id faciat ea solicitudine, attentione, et apparatu, qui dignus sit tali convivio, dignus Deo? Instante itaque celebratione, totis viribus curare debet ut in ara cordis ignem divini amoris succendat, actusque eliciat diversarum virtutum, qui heroici sint, et tanto sacrificio, quantum fieri poterit, convenientes.—(Bona. de Miss celeb. c. v.) How should we prepare?

2d Point. *Jesus Christ by His example shows us how to prepare for the holy sacrifice.* The whole life of the Savior prepared Him for His immolation on the cross: He made it the continual occupation of His mind and of His heart. *With desire I have desired.* The good priest, also, makes his whole life a preparation for the great function which he accomplishes on the altar. To the Holy Mass he refers not only his breviary, so intimately connected with the Mass, not only his evening examinations and morning meditation, but also his good works, all his actions and mortifications, everything, in a word; and he uses everything as a means to clebrate it worthily. Let us often, let us habitually, think on the Mass, especially at the end of the day. It is so good to go to sleep with the thought in our mind, "*To-morrow again I shall sit down at the table of the great King.*"—(Esther v. 12.) If you, however,

will have an admirable example of immediate preparation, you will find it in the heart of our Lord preparing Himself, on the eve of His death, for His two-fold immolation, the mystical one on the altar, and the bloody one on Calvary. "*Jesus knowing that His hour was come . . . knowing that the Father had given Him all things in His hands, and that He came from God and goes to God, He rises from supper . . . and began to wash the feet of the disciples.*"—(J. xiii.)

Jesus knows the power which His Father has given Him, He knows His own dignity; God of God, He is in everything equal to His Father; He came from God, He is not ignorant either of the sublimity of his mission, or of the great interests connected with it; to glorify God through the salvation of the world, such has been the end of His incarnation, and of His life, and such is the object of His death. *He goes to God.* And you also, O priest, when you are about to ascend the altar, think on the immense power you are about to exercise, on the infinite dignity of the Person whom you shall represent, of the sovereign importance of the affairs of which you are about to treat, and entertain within yourself the sentiments which those reflections will suggest.

I. Extent of your powers. Of you it may soon be said, as it was of the adorable Redeemer: "*The Father gave Him all things in His hands.*" How great your power, when the Almighty will be, as it were, subject to your empire! When all the treasures of the Divine mercy will be opened to you, you shall have power to break the captive's chains, to wipe away the tears of the sorrowful, to give happiness to those who suffer. Let your confidence be as extensive as those powers; and know how to use to your spiritual advantage, to that of your brethren, and of the whole world, the boundless credit you shall obtain with God through the spotless victim you are about to offer Him. Have only one fear, that is, not to hope enough. In a few moments you shall have in your hands a pledge much more precious than all the favors which you shall dare to ask.

II. Whom are you about to represent by continuing His sacrifice? Let the thought sink deep in your heart: I am going to lend my voice, my hands, my ministry, to the great and only one priest Jesus Christ; I am going to show Him to the world, for He shall be within me, speaking and working out the most astonishing prodigies. Now, *ubi Christus est, ibi quoque modestia.*—(Greg. Naz.) Do then so regulate

your countenance, your bearing, all your exterior, according to the gravity and the modesty of the Son of God, that you may, whilst rejoicing heaven by your interior disposition, edify the faithful by your exterior appearance. Endeavor to be so pure, so devout, so worthy, of the Divine priest whose place you hold, that He who sees things the most secret, may say of you on the altar: "*This is My beloved son in whom I am well pleased.*"—(Matth. iii: 18.)

III. Ask yourself to whom and for what end you are about to offer the sacrifice. You shall offer it to God infinitely great in power, kind in mercy, severe in justice . . . to God, who could not be honored as He deserved to be, did He not have a God for adorer and victim. You shall offer it in the name of the whole Church, and for the same ends which our Savior had in view when He immolated Himself on Calvary. Let the four following intentions be present to your mind and to your heart: This sacrifice is a *holocaust.* God will, therefore be honored as God should be; He will be honored as much as He deserves to be honored. "*According to Thy name, O God, also is Thy praise.*"—(Ps. xlvii: 11.)—It is a sacrifice of thanksgiving. The most magnificent expression of our gratitude to God, is the offering to Him of the most excellent of His gifts. By offering to Him Jesus Christ, do we not return to Him as much as He has given us?—It is a sacrifice of *propitiation.* Are there sins, be they ever so numerous, which cannot be effaced by one Mass, that is by the sorrows, the tears, the death of Jesus Christ?—It is a sacrifice of *impetration.* Prayer is of itself very powerful; but how much greater its power, when He who prays with us is God, and when He offers as a prayer for us, the blood and wounds with which He is covered, and the abyss of reproaches into which He is plunged!

Finally, as a last preparation for Mass, behold our Savior who rises. "*He rises from supper.*" He humbles Himself, not in presence of His Father only. See Him kneeling at the feet of His disciples. "*He began to wash the feet of the disciples.*" What a lesson! A lesson of purity and innocence. Shall we ever be pure enough to behold without fear this altar of God which causes the saints themselves to tremble? Lesson of humility. A God making Himself the servant of men. . . . Lesson of charity; Jesus washing the feet of His apostles, who will soon forsake Him, even washing the feet of Judas! . . .

Humble yourself, precisely because you are about to be raised to the highest rank of honor. "*The greater thou art, the more humble thou shouldst be in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God.*"—(Eccle. iii : 20.) Ask your own heart, if you have nothing to forgive.

O my God! had I always prepared myself in this manner before ascending the altar, I should experience no anxiety at the remembrance of so many sacrifices for which I will have to give an account. From this day at least, I will treat these holy mysteries with so great a respect, that I may find therein the graces of true santification. I will henceforth eat the sacred bread, and drink the heavenly chalice, with a faith so lively, and a religion so profound, that they may be really for my soul, the bread of eternal life, and the chalice of perpetual salvation. *Panem sanctum vitæ æternæ, et calicem salutis perpetuæ.*

1st Point. *Necessity of preparation for the holy sacrifice.* To enter abruptly upon this angelical function ; to take no time to recollect your mind and purify your heart, would be committing a grave irreverence, and exposing yourself to a terrible danger.—In our sacred mysteries, there is nothing for the senses ; if before commencing the celebration, I do not awaken within me this faith which pierces the clouds, I will soon dishonor them by my tepidity. Will I be able to avoid profaning them ?

2d Point. *Manner of preparing to offer the sacrifice.* The whole life of our Savior was but a preparation for His bloody sacrifice ; the whole life of the good priest prepares him to offer the unbloody sacrifice. An admirable model of proximate preparation in these words of St. John : "*Jesus, knowing that His hour was come . . . knowing that His Father had given Him all things in His hands, and that He came from God, and goes to God, He rises from supper . . . and began to wash the feet of His disciples.*" Reflect on the greatness of the powers which I am about to exercise ; everything shall be placed in my hands ; I am about to show Jesus Christ to the world. I will accomplish on the altar the same ends that He accomplished on the cross. The Savior humbles Himself. He washes the feet of His disciples and of Judas. . . . What a lesson of purity, of charity !

LXXXVI. MEDITATION.

THANKSGIVING AFTER MASS—ITS OBLIGATIONS.

1st.—A DUTY COMMANDED BY GRATITUDE.

2d.—IT PROCURES FOR US THE GREATEST BLESSINGS.

3d.—ITS OMISSION A SINFUL IRREVERENCE.

1st Point. *Thanksgiving after Mass is a duty commanded by gratitude.* God is offended by ingratitude, and commands us to be grateful. The feasts established by Himself under the old law, and by the Church under the new, nearly all of them owe their institution to some signal favor, of which He deired to perpetuate the remembrance. Each of them is an appeal to our gratitude. The Jews had their offerings of peace or their sacrifices of Thanksgiving; we have the sacrifice of the Mass, whose first end is to recall to our minds the mysteries of our redemption. "*Do this in commemoration of Me.*" It is pre-eminently the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Though there never was a heart so free from self-interest as the heart of the Savior, He would, however, complain in a touching manner, when, in exchange for blessings conferred, He received nothing but ingratitude. "*Were not there ten healed, and where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God but this stranger.*" —(Luc. xvii: 17.) I have proved the love which I bear you, by the many good works performed among you: "*For which of those do you stone me?*"—(Jo. x: 32.)

To return thanks to God is an obligation of justice, as we proclaim it before entering upon the great action of the sacrifice: *Vere dignum et justum est . . . nos tibi semper et ubique gratias agere.* But if at all times and everywhere, gratitude should dwell in our hearts, because God does always and everywhere lavish His blessings upon us, how much more should it be so when we have received a gift at His hands, which is none other than Himself.

There are three things in a gift which call forth our gratitude : the value of the gift itself, the affection which it supposes in the donor, the preference exhibited to the recipient. O priest of God, when you come down from the altar what is the treasure that you carry? What have you received? "*Audeo dicere quod Deus cum sit omnipotens plus dare non potuit; cum sit sapientissimus, plus dare nescivit; cum sit ditissimus plus dare non habuit.*"—(St. Aug. Tr. 84 in Joan.) What is wanting to you when you possess Jesus Christ, His body, His soul, His divinity, and He permits you to repeat to Him familiarly that which Himself said to His Father? "*My Savior, whatever is Thine is mine.*" The word which St. Francis de Sales loved to repeat. *He who has Jesus has all,* is now for you a consoling reality.

Is it not to the love of Jesus Christ alone that you are indebted for the treasure which contains all graces? O my God, Thou hadst nothing to gain in this alliance with Thy unworthy creatures ; in giving Thyself to me Thou hast consulted Thy infinite goodness only. In this great charity toward me, I notice a preference which ought to move the hardest heart. When I remember that the privilege which I enjoy, to touch what I touch, to eat what I eat, to do what I do, was not granted to any of the great men of the Old Testament, such as Moses, Abraham, Jeremiah ; nor under the New Law to the holy precursor of whom Thou saidst : "*There has not risen a greater than John the Baptist ;*" when I think that so many people, either through infidelity or heresy, are deprived of holy communion, and that even amongst the children of Thy Church the holy table is of easy access only to the smaller number ; when I consider that I am one of the privileged mortals who may partake of it every day ; that I may, in a manner, call the bread of angels my own, since I distribute it to others,—I ask myself, O my God, how great should be my gratitude toward Thee. "*O my soul, bless the Lord.*"

2d Point. *Thanksgiving after Mass is a duty from which we may derive inappreciable benefits.* The presence of Jesus Christ within us, the dispositions of His heart toward us, His action, the state of sacrifice in which He presents Himself to His Father, everything concurs to make the time that follows the celebration of Mass the most precious time of our whole life.

Before your Mass you adored the Son of God in heaven and in the tabernacle; during the Mass you adored Him on the altar and in your own hands . . . . where do you adore Him now, where is He? *He abideth in me and I in Him.* Blessed is the moment at which you can apply your lips to the opened side of Jesus Christ, and drink at that spring of all graces! Hear you not Him placing at your disposal His omnipotence and His infinite wealth? "*What wilt thou that I do to thee?*" He is within your heart, and is not inactive there.

According to many good theologians, acts of virtue done immediately after communion, have an especial merit, as being the work of a soul intimately united to the soul of the Son of God. Whatever you then do by the inspiration of His holy spirit, He does it with you; you adore and He adores, you return thanks and He returns thanks. Your acts, identified with His, may be said to be divinely human. Never did God look upon you before with so much complacency as at this time.

In what state does He see His Son within you? He sees Him reduced to nothingness, sacrificing Himself for His Church and for you. Whilst time passes away, unperceived perhaps by you, angels admire wonderful operations going on within you; through the alteration which the species of bread and wine undergo, Jesus loses imperceptibly within you His sacramental being; upon your heart, as upon a living altar, He actually sacrifices Himself to His Father, adoring, thanking, imploring His mercy for you. . . . What will the Father refuse Him at such a time, if yourself will put no obstacle to the designs of His love?

3d Point. *To neglect giving thanks after Mass would be a very sinful irreverence.* The apostle St. John said of the traitor: "*He having received the morsel, went out immediately.*"—(xvi: 30.) Do we not, alas, see imitators of Judas amongst some of the priests? They have hardly left the altar and gone into the vestry, when they hasten to put off the sacerdotal vestments. They listen to every one that will speak to them, excepting to Jesus Christ alone, who would have so many things to say to them, who is ready to do them so much good; and, after a few forms of prayer, recited without attention, they carry their adorable guest in the midst of business or of frivolous conversations, forgotten in their hearts like a dead man in his grave.

Where is faith? What blindness in a priest! Even before you had received the Son of God, you had invited all hearts to return thanks: *Sursum corda. . . . Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro . . . .* and now you fail in this duty; when it has become for you an obligation incomparably much more urgent! . . . . You had a moment ago declared, as many as three times, that you deserved not to become the dwelling of a God so holy: *Domine, non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum;* and as soon as He has given Himself to you, you think no longer of Him, you find nothing to say to Him, no homage to offer to His majesty, no favor to ask of Him. This is He, however, of whom the Church sings: *O res mirabilis, manducat Dominum pauper.* Fear you not lest you change into terrible wrath the most generous love, when you sin in so offensive a manner against the respect and gratitude due the greatest of all mysteries?

Consider what St. John Chrysostom says on this matter: *Audiamus, et sacerdotes et subditi. . . . Durum fortasse videbitur quod sum dicturus; sed necesse est tamen, ut ob plerorumque negligentiam, dicatur. Quando ultimæ conæ communicavit Judas . . . , cæteris omnibus recumbentibus, ipse se proripiens excessit; illum imitantur et isti, qui ante gratiarum actionem discedunt.* To thus treat the Son of God, continues the holy doctor, *non mediocrem contemptum habet;* and a few lines lower he adds: "*Quid est aliud, quam extremo supplicio sese obnoxium reddere?*"—(Hom. de Bapt. Chr.)

Examine yourself seriously concerning this grave obligation. How have you accomplished it hitherto? If your conscience reproach you with any grevious negligence in this matter, pray our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive you, before celebrating the holy sacrifice on this day. Promise to consecrate at least a quarter of an hour to your thanksgiving after Mass, and be on your guard against the pretexts which lukewarm priests bring forward for shortening a time which is too short already: "*Nullum certe pietatis sensum habere convincitur, qui non libenter cum Deo manet. Nec valent prætextus negotiorum, vel studii, quibus se tepidi excusant; quod enim gravius et utilius negotium, quam de animæ salute cum Deo tractare? vel quid possunt docere libri, quod non Deus præsens melius doceat?*"—(Bona. Cap. vi.)

1st Point. *Thanksgiving after Mass is a duty commanded by gratitude.* God loves to see us grateful. Jesus complains when men fail in this duty. "Ten lepers I have healed, one alone returns thanks, *where are the nine others?*" If at all times and in every place, we are bound to return thanks to God, *Semper et ubique,* how much more at the foot of the altar on which we just exercised so glorious a ministry and received a gift which surpasses every other gift? *Who possesses Jesus, possesses all.* In what manner and through what motive, did He give Himself to me? Great saints of the Old Dispensation, you never received communion; and under the New Law, how few souls are as much favored as I am in this repect!

2d Point. *Inappreciable benefits we may derive from thanksgiving after Mass.* Jesus Christ is now no longer in heaven, in the tabernacle and on the altar only; He is within your heart, and here He is not inactive. With you and for you, He adores, He prays, He returns thanks. . . . Unite yourself to Him, and your acts, identified with His, shall have an infinite value. Moreover, in what state does God the Father behold His well-beloved Son within you? Your heart is a living altar upon which Jesus sacrifices Himself presently by the alteration which the sacramental species undergo therein. Can God refuse you anything at such a moment?

3d Point. *To omit thanksgiving is a grievous irreverence.* Judas, as soon as he had communicated, withdrew. Do they not who make no thanksgiving, imitate this first profanation of the holy table? Before the consecration you had declared aloud; *Vere dignum et justum est;* and now, after receiving communion, you return no thanks. You proclaimed yourself unworthy to receive Him: *Domine, non sum dignus;* and now, after receiving Him, you think not on Him; you have nothing to say to Him. Do you not fear the consequences of your criminal ingratitude and irreverence?

LXXXVII. MEDITATION.

MANNER OF MAKING THE THANKSGIVING AFTER MASS.

It were desirable that a priest had need of no method to show him how to spend the precious moments which follow the offering of the sacrifice; and that following the inspiration of grace, he would for some time contemplate the Savior within him, and hear Him in profound silence, and for a while speak to Him under the influence of this Divine presence. But as even in this moment, we often feel the necessity of keeping down our imagination, and of directing our interior faculties, we shall here endeavor to help those who find it difficult to converse with God at a time when this practice ought to be so easy. In this exercise as in that of meditation, we may distinguish three different parts:

1st.—THE PREPARATION.

2d.—THE THANKSGIVING PROPER.

3d.—THE CONCLUSION OF THE EXERCISE.

1st Point. *This preparation* consists in three acts: Admiration, adoration and love.

I. As soon as the good priest has divested himself of the sacred vestments, and recited the prescribed canticle *benedicite*, he withdraws to a place proper for recollection, and here secreting himself with Jesus Christ in the sanctuary of his own heart, he silences himself and all creatures. "*The Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him.*"—(Habac. ii: 20.) He continues as long as he can in silent admiration, contemplating in Him the King of the universe. In presence of this great and sweet majesty, he stops and suspends all the motions of his soul, allowing the adorable presence of Jesus to penetrate, transform all his faculties, to take possession of his whole self, and to

substitute a Divine for a human life. There is no way more proper to honor God, nor more in keeping with our nothingness, than this temporary cessation of all action, of all application of the mind, and, as it were, of all personal life in His presence. This is to confess that He is infinitely above, not only our praises, but above all our thoughts, it is offering His infinite being the homage of all that we are, it is saying to Him: "*Lord, who is like unto Thee?*"—(Ps. xxxiv: 10.)

II. Adore with Mary in profound recollection, the Word who was incarnate in her virginal womb, and who now dwells in you. The more He has humbled Himself, the more you should debase yourself in His presence. Adore this God-adorer, who disappears, who annihilates Himself for you before His Father. Convoke all the powers of your soul, all the senses of your body, and say to them: *Come let us adore, and fall down before the Lord,* just as he would do, who, receiving a prince in his house, would call all his servants, his friends and relatives, so that they also might do him honor. Unite your adorations to those of the angels prostrate around you at this moment. Invite them to adore Him in you and with you. "Adore Him, all ye His angels."

III. Love is, however, the sentiment which should predominate in your heart. What would you do with your heart, were you not to give it to Him, who in order to possess it, displays attractions so powerful? What goodness, what kindness, what forgetting of self, in order to think of you only! You have placed fire in your bosom: will you prevent it from burning? Love does all in the thanksgiving of the good priest; love it is which adores, love it is which admires, love also will produce all the acts which will follow.

2d Point. *The thanksgiving proper* consists also of three principal acts: The thanksgiving, the prayer, the offering.

I. You upon whom personally were lavished the Divine favors, are deputed by the whole Church, to offer the great benefactor of the universe the gratitude which is due Him. By ascending the altar you accepted the mission of returning thanks to God for all the blessings He conferred on mankind, and particularly on the inhabitants of the heavenly country. What do they not owe Thee, O my God! O you apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, but thou especially, queen of all the saints, the most privileged and the most grateful of all creatures, what will you return to the Lord for all the blessings you have received

from Him? You invite me to glorify Him with you. "*Magnify the Lord with me.*" This I do. For you and for me I return thanks to Him. How sweet it is for me to acquire claims to your gratefulness in helping you to pay off your own debt of gratitude! Immense as is my own and your indebtedness to Him, it is now in my power to require them. He gave me His Son, the splendor of His glory, the object of His eternal complacency. This well-beloved Son is He who in this moment praises and thanks Him within me in the name of the whole Church of which He is the head. Church of earth, Church of heaven, let us praise, let us bless Him all together, for the granting of a gift which enables us worthily to acknowledge all His gifts. "*Thanks to God for this unspeakable gift!*"

II. Prayer. Since the moment that Christ entered your heart, all power was given to you. Through the boundless power which you have over Him, and through Him over His Father, you have become in a manner like unto the incomparable virgin: *Omnipotentia supplex;* pray, therefore, for yourself and for all the souls whose salvation is dear to you. Extend your desires for Jesus says to you: I am able, I am willing to satisfy them. "*Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.*"—(Ps. lxxx: 11.)

Pray for the just, for the sinners, for those who shall die to-day, but particularly for the clergy whose sanctification procures so much glory to God, and so many blessings to mankind. You may make use of the prayer of the Savior after the supper. "*Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee.*"—(J. xvii: 1.) How admirable those words in the mouth of a priest who had just offered Mass!

Father. First of all taste the sweetness of this name, and fear not to devote too much time to this feeling: Father, for Thou art indeed my Father. I feel it, I understand it now better than ever. A father's duty is to nourish his children; and what is the aliment Thou hast just now given me? Father, my Father, for Jesus Christ is Thy Son, and at this moment I am one with Jesus Christ. "He is in me, and I am in Him." His blood circulates in my veins, the beatings of His heart are the beatings of my own; in beholding me you behold Him. What wilt Thou not grant to the prayers of Jesus which are mine? *The hour has come,* O my Father, the hour favorable to the designs of Thy love.

. . . The hour is come if it ever will, in which to show Thyself what Thou art ; the best, the most tender, the most generous of Fathers ; the hour on which to give me all the lights, all the helps, all the graces which I desire or ought to desire; nay, to lavish them upon me beyond what I can desire or hope for, for Thy Son, who is within me, who prays for me and with me, deserves infinitely more than all that I can ask of Thee.

"*Glorify Thy Son.*" Jesus has been zealous of Thy glory, O my Father ; do Thou glorify Him now. It was to glorify Thee that He humbled Himself to such an extent, and that at this very moment He annihilates Himself before Thee on the altar of my heart. O Lord, grant Him the glory which He desires. The glory of a kind rich man is to succor the indigent, that of a doctor is to cure, that of a Savior is to save. . . . This favor grant to Him, O holy Father. Permit it not to be said that He came to visit a sick man and that He did not cure him ; that He visited a poor man or a repentent sinner and that He did not assist or sanctify them. . . . *that Thy Son may glorify Thee.* O Father of Jesus, and my Father, if Thou grant me this favor, Thyself shall be glorified, not by me, but by Thy Son in me. He shall be in my heart to inflame it with the fire of Thy love ; in my mind to inspire it with holy projects ; in my mouth to praise Thee and proclaim Thy word; in all the works of my ministry in order to bless them. Sinners shall be converted, the lukewarm shall become fervent, and the glory of all shall return to Thee.

III. Offering. Offer yourself first to Jesus Christ, and next offer Jesus Christ to His Father.—The Son of God has given Himself to you, He asks you to give yourself to Him. To a friend so generous, make an entire, full surrender of yourself, intrusting to Him all your solicitudes for time and for eternity ; having no other care than to please Him, letting Him act and live in you, as in a house of which He is the sole Master. You have a beautiful model of this offering in the prayer, *suscipe Domine.* But since Jesus Christ is yours, offer Him to His Father according to His intention ; He has been given to you, that He might make up for all your deficiencies. What can be wanting to you, what have you to fear, when He is with you ?

Are you disquieted because of the insufficiency of your homages, which, considered on your part, are indeed nothing? Behold within you

a God disappearing in presence of God, placing Himself, as it were, under His feet; He renders to Him, and through Him you offer the Almighty an homage as great as Himself is great. Are you alarmed at the remembrance of your sins, the imperfection of your penance, at your want of all virtue? Offer to God the penance which Jesus Christ accomplished for you; offer to Him the contrition of His heart, the sorrows of His soul, the sufferings of His body; for all those belong to you. Offer up the holiness of His life in order to repair the defilements of yours. Let His virtues compensate for your vices, His meekness for your impatiences, His humility for your pride. . . . Say to Him, I am unable, O my God, to honor Thee of myself. The darkness of my mind, the vagaries of my imagination, do not permit me to have a thought worthy of Thee; but I offer to Thee, the thoughts of Jesus, the praise which He renders Thee now in my heart, and the praise which He will render to Thee in heaven during all eternity. I grieve at seeing how cold my heart is for Thee; but I offer to Thee the heart of Thy Son with all the ardors of His burning charity. Through this Divine heart, which Thou has given me I love Thee. Do not ask me the question which grieved St. Peter: Lovest Thou me? For I should answer Thee as He did, but with entire assurance: Yes, O Lord, I love Thee, and with my love Thou shouldest be satisfied, for it draws an infinite perfection from the heart of Jesus which is in me.

3d Point. *The conclusion of the thanksgiving* consists in resolving to manifest by works, on the very day, the protestation of the gratitude and devotion offered to Jesus Christ. When one has received such an evidence of His love, he is impatient of proving his own affection, he simply looks for the occasion. Lord what wilt Thou have me to do? They are to undertake and to suffer everything for His glory; labors, fatigues, ready contradictions, humiliations of all kinds. My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready. A life of recollection, of zeal and of self-immolation, ought to continue the thanksgiving after the Divine sacrifice. Determine in what particular point, and in what circumstances you will show God that you do not forget the immense favor He condescended to grant you.

1st Point. *The preparation for the exercise of thanksgiving* consists in three acts: Admiration, adoration and love.

I. Retire with Jesus Christ within your own heart, suspend all the exercises of your mind, remain in silent admiration. . . . This is the fittest manner of honoring His infinite majesty. . . . It is as much as saying to Him: Lord, who is like unto Thee! II. In profound recollection, adore the word of God made flesh. Unite your adorations to those of Mary and of the angels. Invite all creatures to adore Him in you and with you. III. The sentiment, however, which should possess your whole heart is the sentiment of love.

2d Point. *The thanksgiving proper* should contain also three acts: Thanksgiving, prayer and offering. I. Return thanks in the name of all the inhabitants of heaven. Apostles, martyrs, confessors; and you especially, queen of all the saints, what do you not owe Almighty God? . . . . I shall help you to solve your immense debt. . . . . Ask. All power has been placed in your hands. II. Pray for all; but particularly for the clergy. Make use of the touching prayer of Jesus Christ after the last supper. *My Father, the hour has come, glorify Thy Son*, that He may glorify Thee in me, with me, through me. III. Offer yourself first to Jesus Christ. Receive, O Lord, all my liberty . . . all that I have, all that I am . . . but also offer Jesus Christ to His Father. To you He has been given to supply what you are in need of. . . . Offer the sanctity of His life to repair the defilements of yours.

3d Point. *The conclusion of the thanksgiving.* Manifest by works on the very day, the protestations of gratitude and devotion which you offered to Jesus Christ. A life of recollection, of zeal, of self-immolation, should continue the thanksgiving after Mass.

LXXXVIII. MEDITATION.

MONDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT—THE HOLY JOYS OF A COMMUNION WELL MADE.

1st.—A COMMUNION PROPERLY MADE PROCURES SPIRITUAL JOYS.

2d.—NATURE OF THOSE SPIRITUAL JOYS OF THE SOUL.

1st Point. *Communion procures spiritual joy.* Speaking of the manna, which was but a figure of the Eucharist, the Holy Ghost said: "*Thou gavest them bread from heaven . . . . having in it all that is delicious, and the sweetness of every taste.*"—(Sap. xvi: 20.) "This heavenly bread," says St. Cyprian, "contains, as well as the manna, all imaginable tastes; through a marvellous virtue, it enables those who receive it worthily to experience whatever pleasure they desire, and is unsurpassed in sweetness."—(Serm. de cœna Dom.) St. Macarius avers that "the well disposed soul finds in holy communion delights unutterable; that she discovers therein riches which *the eye has not seen, which the ear has not heard.*" St. Bonaventure puts the following words on the lips of Jesus Christ: "O soul, hast thou not known by experience, that in receiving Me thou wert tasting honey and the comb which contains it, viz: the sweetness of My Divinity united to My body and to My blood?" All the works of the fathers express the same sentiments. As to the Scripture, when speaking of the Eucharist, it gives us to understand by the symbols which it uses, how delightful this food is to hearts that are well prepared. Now it is called a delicious wine, and again an exquisite viand, and bread made of the purest wheat. It represents to us holy communion under the image of a magnificent feast, such an one as a king would make when celebrating the wedding of his son. Interpreters apply to the Eucharist the different passages of the Scripture where mention is made of honey, of milk, of wine, of all that is most desirable in matter of food and beverage: "*Suavitatem hujus sacramenti,*" says St. Thomas, "*nullus*

exprimere sufficit, per quod spiritualis dulcedo in suo fonte gustatur."—(Op. 57.) Interior mortified persons, well understand the following words of St. Jerome: "*Hoc solum habemus in præsenti sæculo bonum, si vescamur carne Domini.*"—(In cap. 3, Ezech.) Hear the venerable Berchmans: "O my dear Master, what is there on earth, after receiving communion, that can give me peace and contentment?"

2d Point. *What is the nature of these holy joys which the holy Eucharist procures for our souls?* The answer of St. Thomas to this question should quiet those persons who, though preparing worthily for communion, complain that they experience no delight in receiving it. An object, he says, may cause us pleasure, either by itself, or by the image we form of it to ourselves; by itself, when it actually impresses our senses, as when we behold or taste it; by its image, when the mind occupies itself with the advantageous idea it had conceived of the same; for the mere thought of that which is good, procures in the soul an agreeable sentiment, especially when we possess or hope to possess it. The avaricious man, for instance, feels pleased whenever he thinks of his treasure, though he keeps it locked up in his coffers without ever seeing or touching it. The Eucharist brings delight to the faithful soul, sometimes in one, sometimes in another of those two manners.

I. Although in communicating I experience no sensible consolation, is it not great comfort for my soul to know most certainly that Jesus Christ gives Himself to me, and that in possessing Him, I possess the sovereign good, the source of all blessings? When the Son of God comes to us, said Father Alvarez, He does not leave in heaven His spiritual riches, His graces, His favors; He comes with His hands full of gifts, and His heart filled with love. But if He were to come alone, would He not suffice for my happiness? Is He not Himself the most precious of all treasures? Do I not know that spiritual favors and consolations are one of the least fruits of communion; that the Good Savior often deprives of them, His most devoted servants, so as to teach them to have more esteem for Him than for His gifts. "A great comfort it is to be satisfied with God, expecting no consolation from Him. Did you know the good that God does you in giving Himself to you, though He leaves you without any sentiment of devotion! If it were in your power, after communicating, to comprehend the words of the

Savior to His apostles after the Last Supper, just after giving them communion with His own hand : *Know you what I have done to you?* you would be more pleased than with any other joy, than if you enjoyed all the pleasures on earth. Jesus has now given you His body for your food, His blood for your beverage, His soul for your ransom, His divinity for your support, His heaven for your inheritance. . . . He enlightens your mind, increases your love, purifies your heart, mortifies your senses, weakens the strength of your passions ; He communicates to you His virtues, He sanctifies you ; what sweetness is there that can compare with that excessive goodness to you?"—(Father Nouet.) We must confess, with St. Francis de Sales, that he is too avaricious indeed, to whom God does not suffice.

II. It happens also that holy communion fills the soul with sensible joys ; when Jesus Christ makes the soul taste the sweetness of His grace, and of the operation which produces it. Then, says St. Laurence Justinian, the heart, though ever so hard, is penetrated with the most tender feelings. The soul, fragrant with heavenly perfumes, becomes inflamed with the ardors of Divine love, sings the praises of Him who is all hers. *My beloved is mine*, and gives herself all to Him, *and I to Him.* She devotes herself to His service, and only waits for the occasion of a sacrifice in order to show that she loves Him. For all the satisfactions of this lower world she experiences sovereign disgust, and becomes unconcerned about all the humiliations of life, so that she remains unmoved, either by the insults, the contradictions, and all the ingratitude of creatures. Two things produce in her this happy change: the sight and the love of Jesus Christ, the sight of His perfections, and the love of His blessings.

It is true that those delights in communion are not granted to all, nor in the same degrees to those who receive them ; few are the souls that are sufficiently pure, detached from themselves, crucified with Jesus Christ, to savor the sweetness of those chaste delights. As for the spiritual joy caused by the knowledge of the immense blessings contained in this sacrament, every Christian can experience it. All that is needed for this is to esteem Divine grace, to desire one's salvation, to sigh after the possession of heaven, and to bear in mind that the best way to realize these holy desires is to receive holy communion.

I well understand, O Lord, Thy merciful design in instituting this

sacrament so well named : *Dulcedo dulcedinum, amor amorum.* Thou wouldst unite Thyself to man, render him like unto Thee, replenish him with delights, and thus bring him to perfect love, wherein consists the holy life of which this heavenly bread is the principle as it is also the pledge of life everlasting. O Jesus, accomplish in Thy ministers, this design so worthy of Thy heart, and then make use of our zeal to accomplish it in all Thy disciples ; grant that Thy love be the life of all Thy priests. To love Thee, to be loved by Thee, and to have no occupation, save to gain hearts to Thee, is indeed a noble and blessed life.

1st Point. *Communion procures spiritual joys.* Manna, a figure of the holy Eucharist, is called, in Scripture, a heavenly bread, having in it all that is delicious : "*Nullus exprimere sufficit, suavitatum hujus sacramenti, per quod spiritualis dulcedo in suo fonte gustatur.*"—(St. Tho.) In this world, says St. Jerome, we have only one real joy and that is to eat the flesh of the Savior ; and there is one thing only which should cause us to grieve, and that is to be deprived of this sacrament.

2d Point. *Nature of those joys.* The Eucharist brings delight to our souls in two ways.

I. In case that I experience no sensible joy, is it not great comfort to know most certainly that I possess Jesus Christ, and that in possessing Him, I possess the source of all blessings? He comes to us with His hands full of gifts and His heart full of love. Do I not know that feelings of sweetness are amongst the least fruits of communion? There is much comfort in being pleased with God, though we expect from Him no other blessings.

II. Sometimes Jesus Christ is pleased to make us taste the sweetness of the operation by which He produces grace within us, and then the hardest heart is penetrated with the most tender sentiments. Let us permit this good Master to do with us what He wishes ; let us abandon ourselves to the affection of His Divine heart.

LXXXIX. MEDITATION.

TUESDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI—DISPOSITION FOR COMMUNION.

Without speaking of a lively faith, humility and great purity of heart, which are general dispositions and the more necessary ones for holy communion, we find two other excellent ones in these words of the spouse in the canticle of canticles: "*I sat down under his shadow whom I desired, and his fruit was sweet to my palate.*"—(C. ii: 3.) The sacramental species which hide the splendors of Jesus Christ in this mystery, are like the shadow of that tree of life of which the fruit is so sweet. To desire to unite ourselves to the Savior, who Himself desires so ardently to be united to us, then to become wrapped up in peaceful recollection, when we are about to contract or when we have already contracted this union with Him, are two excellent dispositions to eat with utility to our souls, and to relish this bread of angels.

1st.—ARDENT DESIRE OF RECEIVING COMMUNION.

2d.—RECOLLECTING ONESELF AT THE MOMENT OF COMMUNION.

1st Point. *Ardent desire to communicate.* Is it important? What will excite it within us?

I. As a feeling of hunger indicates, ordinarily, that the body is disposed to profit by taking food, so a great desire to receive the Eucharist, is an excellent preparation for participating abundantly in its blessed effects. St. Augustine said that: "*Panis iste famem hominis interioris requirit.*"—(Tr. 26, in Joan.) This, St. Jerome expresses happily, when commenting on this verse of the 80th psalm: "*Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it.*" Will you receive the food of the Lord, and eat the Lord Himself? Hear what He says: *Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it.* Open the mouth of your heart . . . the measure of graces which you shall receive, depends not on Me but on you: "*Non est in mea po-*

testate, sed in tua est; si volueris, me totum accipies." O my soul, deeply consider this word, if thou desirest Jesus Christ, if thou desirest Him only, and with all the ardor of which thou art capable, thou shalt receive Himself and all the good He wishes to do you : "*Igitur accedat nemo cum nausea, nemo resolutus, omnes accensi, omnes ferventes et excitati. . . . Ne torpeamus tanta digni caritate et honore putati. Nonne videtis quanta promptitudine paruli papillas capiunt, et quanto impetu labia uberibus infigunt? Accedamus cum tanta nos quoque alacritate ad hanc mensam, et ab ubera poculi spiritalis: quinimo cum longe major i trahamus, tanquam infantes lactentes, spiritus gratiam, et unus sit nobis dolor hac esca privari.*"—(St. John Chrys.) We are never so well disposed to receive the graces of this sacrament as when we say to the Savior : "*My soul has desired Thee in the night, yea, and with my spirit within me, in the morning early, I will watch for Thee,*" —(Is. xxvi: 9.) The early Christians called the Eucharist *desiderata*, because it was as the centre of all their desires.

II. Two things contribute principally to excite in us a desire to communicate : reflection and mortification. Desire is a motive of the soul, whereby, knowing the value of a blessing which it does not possess, it aspires to possess it. We ought, therefore, to reflect on the marvellous fruits of the sacrament of our altars. A soul which really strives to sanctify itself, and knows the virtue of the sacrament, either to destroy sin to its very roots, or to raise it to the most sublime perfection, must necessarily be inflamed with an ardent desire to receive it. Here, however, fasting is to be united with meditation, that is to say, the mortification of the senses, to the consideration of the infinite blessings procured through a fervent communion. The enjoyment of earthly pleasures lessens the strength of the soul, and makes it less fit to desire heavenly delights. Supernatural joys have few attractions for a heart fully taken up with purely human gratifications ; but now, deprive this heart of these frivolous amusements; whereas it can not live without enjoyment, he will run with all his might in the way opened to him, showing him the sweetness he will experience at the Eucharistic banquet. —The Hebrews had to gird their loins in order to eat the paschal lamb, and with it they had to eat wild bitter lettuce, in order to show us by these types of mortification, how useful it is to prepare for communion by exercises of penance. To him alone who will conquer himself, and

repress his evil propensities, did Almighty God promise the manna and its hidden sweetness. "*To him that overcometh, I will give the hidden manna.*"—(Ap. ii: 17.) The Eucharist is a source of ineffable delight; but for whom? for those who have control over themselves, and not for those who are the slaves of their sensual inclinations: "*It shall yield dainties to the kings.*"—(Gen. xlix: 20.)

2d Point. *Be deeply recollected* during the moments which immediately precede or follow holy communion. The soul, if ever, must be attentive to what it does when there is question of accomplishing an act so Divine. Is it not deplorable to know that even then, our mind needs its greatest possible concentration? St. Thomas distinguishes two sorts of communions among those which are made in the state of grace, and with the dispositions absolutely requisite. The one he calls a communion *habitually* spiritual, and the other a communion *actually* spiritual. In the one they eat the Eucharistical bread with the habit of faith, charity, etc., only, because the mind is distracted; in the other they perform acts of those virtues, because they apply themselves wholly to the great action which they perform. The former suffices to increase sanctifying grace, for it is supposed that they do not consent to those evagations of the mind; but the latter is necessary for spiritual refection, that is, as the holy doctor explains it, in order to taste the sweetness of the sacrament, and to gather the fruits thereof. Jesus Christ commanded the former when He said: "*Take and eat, this is My body;*" and He seems to recommend the latter by adding: "*Do this in commemoration of Me,*" since it amounts to saying: Think of Me, believe, hope in Me, love Me. This latter manner of receiving the Eucharist with respectful attention, and by producing the interior acts which the greatness and goodness of the Son of God should inspire, is the only one really worthy of Him and of ourselves. Of this also, do the doctors of the Church speak, when they exhort us to adore Jesus Christ giving Himself to us, to humble ourselves in His presence, to converse with Him, to ask Him to give us the help we need; for in this consists this spiritual manducation which we should join to the sacramental manducation. "When the Savior enters a well-disposed soul," says St. John Chrysostom, "He pours therein the rays of His light, and fills it with His unction. He solicits it to love, to relish, to embrace

Him; and it is chiefly through the faithful correspondence with these graces that it becomes intimately united to Him, and that it makes rapid progress in virtue." Let us be extremely careful in these blessed moments, to put all earthly matters out of our minds, so as to think on Jesus Christ alone. Let us imitate Abraham, who, wishing to offer his sacrifice to God, left all his servants at the foot of the mount, and Moses likewise, who went up alone to the summit of Sinai, ordering the people to remain below: "*Ingemisce et dole, quod adhuc ita carnalis sis . . . . tam immortificatus a passionibus . . . . tam cito distractus, tam raro tibi plene collectus.*"—(Im. l. iv: c. 7.)

1st Point. *Ardent desire to communicate.* "Will you," says St. Jerome, "eat fruitfully the body of the Lord? Hear what Himself said: Open the mouth of thy heart." Grace is measured out in proportion to our desires: *Esurientes implevit bonis.* Two things excite in us these holy desires: reflection, which enlighteneth us regarding the invaluable price of a good communion, and mortification. The enjoyment of earthly pleasures renders a soul less desirous of heavenly joys. To be able to relish this hidden manna, one must conquer himself.

2d Point. *Become deeply recollected before, during and after communion.* Then it is, if ever, that a soul ought to be attentive to what is passing within her, and to what she is doing. Let us be guided by faith; we shall adore Jesus Christ giving Himself to us; we shall humble ourselves in His presence; we shall entrust to Him our miseries: we shall ask of Him the help we need, and set no bounds to our confidence . . . for in this consists that spiritual manducation which we should join to the sacramental reception of the sacrament.

XC. MEDITATION.

WEDNESDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE—VISITS TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

1st.—THE GOOD PRIEST IS ATTENTIVE TO VISIT JESUS CHRIST IN HIS SANCTUARY.

2d.—MANNER OF MAKING THOSE VISITS.

1st Point. *The good priest loves to visit Jesus Christ in His sanctuary.* Is there for him an occupation more proper, more sweet, more useful?

I. Supposing that a monarch, with no other view than that of honoring, protecting and showing me his affection, has fixed his abode in the place where I live, that I may go into his presence, and have recourse to His goodness as often as I like, shall I remain insensible to this kindness? Will it not impose any obligation upon me? What would they say of my conduct if I neglected to go and see Him, and to have recourse to His wonderful kindness? Jesus Christ has done for us that which no king ever did for the most beloved among His subjects. What was His intention in fixing His dwelling place among men? Had He intended only to be their victim on the altar, and the food of their souls at the holy table, it would have sufficed for Him to be present under the sacred species, during the Mass and at the time of communion only. In abiding near us continuously He wished to be always within our reach and to render us at every moment all the offices of the kindest friendship. . . . Now, shall we leave Him alone in our churches? Will not the ministers themselves go often to adore Him and to receive His blessings? Though He passed among the Jews in doing good and multiplying miracles, they never knew nor loved Him, and their conduct is truly inexplicable; let us, however, confess that indifference toward Him in His sacrament, would denote on our part a blindness not less offensive to His adorable heart. O priest! go and visit Him, both in your own name and in the name of those souls whose care He has Him-

self entrusted to you. Is there an occupation more reasonable, more proper than this? Is there any other which you should like equally well?

II. Every good son loves to visit his father and to be in his company, and the greatest joy of a friend is to converse with a faithful friend. Ah! How grateful we should feel, to have our Savior so near us in the place of our exile! to be permitted to make Him the confident of our sorrows, to pour forth our tears into His bosom! The Scripture considers it as a singular favor, granted to the Patriarch Joseph, that wisdom went down with him into his prison and that it did not abandon him in his chains.—(Sap. x: 13.) But the Word made flesh, the incarnate wisdom dwells with us in the prison of this life of sorrows, and adideth with us during all the time of our captivity. The good priest does not seek consolations elsewhere; a visit to the blessed sacrament cures him of his fatigue, does away with his sadness, reanimates his hopes. Did he not often enter his church with his heart filled with grief and come our of it filled with joy and courage? Oh! That my habitual disposition may be that of David when he exclaimed: "*How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord God of Host; my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord.*"—(Ps. lxxxiii.)

III. To motives of attraction and propriety, we should add the motive of an immense interest. Never does one, led on by his faith, go to visit the Savior in His tabernacle, without receiving from Him some precious benediction. He is not day and night in our sanctuaries with the intention of saying nothing to us or of giving us nothing. His treasures are there, always open, to enrich those who will come and expose to Him their sad condition. . . . Is He not in the Eucharist, what He was during His mortal life, the friend of sinners, the consoler of the afflicted, the Savior of souls? He here continues to work out the wonders of power and bounty which He performed in Judea; healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, raising the dead to life! He longs to see His ministers come and speak to Him of their projects, ask for His counsel, and take from His heart the sacred fire which they must enkindle in the hearts of their brethren.

This devotion has been remarkable in all the priests whom Almighty God made use of for the great works of His mercy. Let us recall to mind, St Vincent Ferrier, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Francis Xavier

and many others. The apostles of the Indies often passed whole nights in adoration before the blessed Eucharist. St. Vincent de Paul never failed when he went out, to salute the blessed sacrament first, and after his return to go and give an account to Jesus Christ, of what he had done for His glory. M. Olier said: "The priest who is attentive to honor the Savior in this mystery, and to beseech Him in behalf of sinners, will sooner or later obtain their conversion. In thus staying before the holy of holies and praying to him, he must necessarily participate in the sentiments of our Lord and in His power for touching, enlightening and converting the peoples. . . . I die of grief upon seeing that Jesus Christ is not honored in the most holy sacrament, neither by the priests nor their people."

Pious Cenobites in the fifth century had consecrated themselves as a guard of perpetual honor to the Divine King. Divided in different tribes, as the children of Israel of old, they kept in the temple of the Lord a psalmody which was never interrupted.

Let us bless Providence for having raised up in our days religious communities whose vocation is to render perpetual homage to the God of our sanctuaries. Nay, more, this zeal is not locked within cloisters, and fervent laymen give us beautiful examples of it; they are seen in many of our cities, adoring the most blessed sacrament, not only during the whole day, but also during all hours of the night. But, notwithstanding the laudable motives of emulation, how many reasons have we not to deplore indifference and neglect toward this admirable and touching mystery? Let us acknowledge it. "There are thousands of associates to the perpetual adoration, and millions of hearts unconcerned about the presence of the Son of God residing in the midst of us."—(P. Berhier, Refit, II.)[1]

1. Let us here record two observations of P. de St. Jure. I. It is not always at the moment of the visit, or immediately after, that we gather the fruits thereof; but when, later on, you will overcome a temptation, practice a good work, the grace that you had needed in order to perform that good work, to gain that victory, was given you in consequence of that visit. II. Although when in presence of the blessed sacrament you should not perform any interior act, because of your extreme aridity; though you should do nothing else, but present yourself to Jesus Christ, bringing to Him your body, with all the good will of which you are capable, you must not believe that you are losing your time for this visit will be at least an actual protestation of your faith, an evidence of your respect, a pledge of your love; for, unless you believed in the real presence, if you had not the intention of honoring the Savior, if you did not love Him, it is beyond question that you would not have come and knelt at His feet, as in this case you would have no motive so to act.

2d Point. *Manner of making those visits.* Saint Augustine said that his mother went twice every day to the church, in order to hear the discourses of the Lord, and that the Lord might hear her prayers. If we both listen to Jesus Christ and speak to Him, our visits will be equally consoling and useful.

I. We do not sufficiently hear Jesus Christ, especially immediately after communion and when we go to visit Him. We should, after becoming penetrated with the sentiment of His presence by an act of faith, enter into a spirit of profound recollection. Where am I? Where art Thou, O my God? What art Thou, and what am I? Recollection and attention. "*I will hear what the Lord will speak in me.*"—(Ps. lxxxiv : 9.) Let us hear what He inspires, what He expects of us, what He reproaches us with, what He approves of in our conduct. . . . He generally speaks in a more luminous manner after communion ; but He also speaks to the interior soul in the visits she makes Him, and we have almost infallible evidence that He has spoken when He imparts a desire to love Him, to suffer and to do much for Him. O Jesus, what didst not Thou say to the holy preachers of Thy law, to Thy faithful ministers, when they presented themselves at the foot of Thy altars? Here it is, in the solitude of Thy sanctuaries that we experience in our hearts the truth of Thy promise. *I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart*– (Os. ii : 14.)

II. The Savior wishes also that we speak to Him. Are we not bound to offer Him homage? Have we no request to ask of Him? Let us honor His infinite greatness by acknowledging our nothingness before Him; His sovereign dominion by offering Him all we have received of Him ; His holiness by our confusion over our past defilements : His power and goodness by ardent, filial prayers. We have books which contain forms of colloquies with Jesus Christ present in this mystery ; but when we are influenced by the spirit of faith, sentiments multiply in our hearts without act or study, and aspirations pour out of them like sparks flying out of a furnace. "*My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God.*"—(Ps. lxxxiii : 2.) And is there anything at that time which they dare not ask our Lord Jesus Christ, either for themselves, their brethren or the Church? . . . . With the greatest simplicity we make known to Him our miseries, expose to Him our sorrows, consult Him in our doubts and difficulties. "Jesus teaches in

the Eucharist, without display or sound of words ; He converses with him who hears Him, as a friend converses with a friend. Let us revive our faith ; let us often present ourselves before the tabernacle of the new law and we shall soon experience that this exercise is not only one of the most holy, but one of the most sweet, consoling and interesting devotions of religion.

1st Point. *The good priest is assiduous to visit the blessed sacrament.* There is no occupation more just, more sweet, more useful. Comparison of a monarch, who, to give me evident proofs of his love, would fix his abode near me. If the Savior had thought of the sacrifice and of communion only, it had sufficed Him to be present under the sacred species at the times when those great acts are accomplished ; He has therefore intended something more ! and we leave Him alone ? Show me the good son who does not love to go and see his father. Let us go thither for consolation. "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord, God of hosts !" Our own interests invite us to go and visit the holy Eucharist.

2d Point. *Manner of making those visits.* The good priest adores, hears and speaks to our Lord in the Eucharist.—He establishes himself in profound recollection, then opens the ear of his heart to the inspirations of his adorable guest. O Jesus, what do not Thou say every day to the souls that remain in silent recollection at the foot of Thy altar ? The Savior wishes us also to speak to Him. Are we not bound to adore, have we no request to address to Him ? Let us make known to Him our sorrows, consult Him in our doubts and difficulties. . . . Such has always been the conduct of good priests. Recall to mind St. Vincent Ferrier, St. Francis Borgia, St. Francis Xavier, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Vincent de Paul, M. Olier.

XCI. MEDITATION.

APPLICATION OF THE SENSES TO THE MYSTERY OF THE EUCHARIST.[1]

FIRST PRELUDE.—If I do not perform this exercise in a sanctuary where our Lord resides, I will place myself in spirit in presence of the blessed sacrament solemnly exposed. If I make it after the celebration of Mass, my soul will be the sanctuary to which I shall go.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten me, O Lord, take pity on my blindness. Let Thy Word, the eternal light which came down on earth to enlighten every man coming into the world, dissipate the darkness of my soul, so that I may know Him such as faith shows Him to me in His sacrament: "*May He cause the light of His countenance to shine upon us, and may He have mercy on us.*"—(Ps. lxvi : 1.)

I. *Application of the sight.* See the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ. Never was there a man who had so much of even exterior beauty. "*Beautiful above the sons of men.*"—(Ps. xliv : 3.) The bearing, the mien, the manners, all is Divine. In seeing Him in the deserts the multitude even forget to eat. In order to excite yourself to gratitude and love, consider Him in the different situations of His life, but particularly during His passion, and after His resurrection. See His head, once crowned with thorns, and now crowned with glory! . . . His hands and feet, once pierced with nails, and now more resplendant than the stars. . . . Think now on His soul; consider all His faculties; His memory ever occupied with the interests of God and our own, with the glory of God and the salvation of men. Think on His intellect. "*In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*"—(Col. ii : 3.) What noble inclinations in His will! what virtues, what flames of charity, what tender compassions for our miseries! . . . We have spoken of His humanity. Consider Jesus Christ, as God. The Word, eternally begotten in the brightness of the saints, infinitely good, wise, mighty . . . personally united to human nature. . . . Behold

1. This exercise of which we gave the method at the beginning of the first vol. p. 18, may be practiced with advantage after communion, or in the visits to the blessed sacrament.

Him who is hid under appearances so mean. Believe it firmly. Behold the guest of whom yourself are the dwelling. When you have received communion, He comes for no other purpose than to lavish His favors on you. Admire, adore, praise, give thanks. *Adoro te devote*, etc.

II. *Application of the hearing.* Hear the eternal Father saying to you as to the disciples on Mount Thabor: "*This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him?*"—(Luc. ix : 34.) Yes, hear ye Him. Beseech the Holy Ghost to give you grace to understand well what He is going to teach you. With Mary Magdalen, place yourself at His feet, and be attentive to each one of His words, for He habitually teaches us His Gospel in this mystery. How eloquently He here teaches the contempt of the world, the esteem of God alone, abnegation of self, obedience, patience, interior life. . . . Admirable are the secrets which He here discovers to priests recollected and fervent. What tender reproaches He addresses from His tabernacle to those who are lukewarm, unmortified, squandering their time, without pity for souls, without gratitude toward Himself! . . . If you deserve those reproaches, humble yourself and promise Him to be more faithful; say to Him through the desires of your heart, that which your lips repeat every day: "*Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*"—(Ps. cxviii : 105.) Thy words, O Lord, shall be the rule of my judgments, the lamp which will guide all my steps. Thy maxims are the only ones which I will follow.

III. *Application of the smell.* The name Christ, which we join with that of Jesus, creates in us the idea of balsam and perfume. St. Laurence Justinian calls the holy Eucharist: *Cellarium continens omnium aromatum pretiositatem et virtutem.* Those aromatics so often mentioned in the book of canticles are the attractions of the virtues of our Savior. They act on souls as a powerful charm, to withdraw them from the corruption of the world, and make them seek after Him in the way of His commandments and of His counsels. "*Draw me, we will run after Thee to the odor of Thy ointments.*"—(Cant. i : 3.) Imagine God the Father saying to you in the language of Isaac to Jacob: "*Behold the smell of My Son is as the smell of a plentiful field.*"—(Gen. xxvii : 27.) The flowers and fruits of that field are an image of the exemplary virtues which Jesus Christ practices in the holy sacrament, of His detachment, charity, unaltarable meekness, and of that state of victim to which He reduces Himself in order to honor His Father, to

appease His anger, and to obtain for us all the graces we need. Think on the joy which the most Holy Trinity receives from this perpetual sacrifice, which embalms heaven and earth. "*The Lord smelled a sweet savor.*"—(Gen. viii : 21.) Bear in mind that if the priests, being placed as they are, nearer Jesus Christ, and having with Him more intimate relations than others, breathe in the odor of His virtues more fully than the simple faithful, they are also under stricter obligation to spread it around them ; and never forget the recommendation addressed to you on the day of your sacerdotal consecration : "*Sit odor vitæ vestræ delectamentum Ecclesiæ Christi.*"—(Pont.) Consider, finally, that good example is like incense which must be consumed by fire before it exhales its perfume ; so all our virtues draw all their merit before God, from the charity which animates them, and sacrifices us to the interests of His glory.

IV. *Application of the taste.* Of all our senses, the taste is the one which applies more naturally to the holy Eucharist. In this mystery all relates to the taste ; the figures which represent it ; the names given to it ; the symbols under which it is hid ; the invitations to receive it addressed to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. His invitations are invitations to a feast. "*Take, eat My body, drink My blood ; come, My friends, drink this wine which throws the soul into a state of holy inebriation,* procures for it a sweet slumber and delightful repose." In the language of the Church, the Eucharist is a heavenly bread which contains all real delights ; *Omne delectamentum in se habentem.* But as food in order to be relished needs be taken somewhat slowly, so the more will you meditate upon the condescendence, kindness, beauty, and all the qualities of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, the more you will relish the sweetness of this heavenly bread. If your soul be moved and inflamed by those considerations, you will experience a heavenly joy, which will inspire you with contempt for all earthly carnal joys : *Gustato spiritu* says St. Bernard, *necesse est carnem despicere.* You shall then say with holy Job : "*Can an unsavory thing be eaten that is not seasoned with salt? or can a man take that which, when tasted, bringeth death?*"—(Job. VI: 6.)

Offer to our Lord the following beautiful prayer of St. Augustine : *Obsecro Domine Jesu, omnia mihi amarescant, et tu solus dulcis*

appareas, quia tu es dulcedo inœstimabilis, per quam omnia dulcorantur.

V. *Application of the touch.* As soon as fire touches wood it heats it, inflames it, and changes it into fire; there are herbs, balms, medicinal liquors which heal sores by contact. Do you seek a remedy which will cure the infirmities of your soul? Apply to it the body and the blood of Jesus Christ. During His mortal life a secret *virtue came out of Him* and healed all the sick.—(L. VI: 19.) The same must also be said of the holy Eucharist. Let us hear St. John Chrysostom speaking of communion in connection with the history of the woman who had an issue of blood: "*Let us also touch this fringe of the garment of Jesus, or rather let us touch Himself. . . .Let us approach Him with a lively faith and a firm hope, for if those who touched His robe were perfectly cured, how can we fail to be healed when we possess Himself?*" . . . .Do, therefore, unite your senses to the senses of your Savior, nay, unite your soul to His soul. Unite your intellect to His, that you may be healed of your blindness; unite your will to His will, that henceforth you may, with Him, will nothing else but what God wills; unite all your being to His divinity, by faith, confidence and love; You shall therein find your abode, the place of your repose, and a foretaste of heavenly delights.

In entering this octavo, form, as it were, a spiritual bouquet of all the resolutions you have taken in honor of the most blessed sacrament. Ah, how great the joy or the terror which this mystery will cause us when we shall appear before the tribunal of God! Say not that you shall keep away from it; this we cannot do, and it would be moving away from the *life;* our duty is to treat it with all the respect which it deserves. Let us address to our Lord the following touching prayer of St. Anselm: *En igitur, misericordissime Jesu, fateor immensæ bonitati tuæ me esse nimis audacem peccatorem, ac plurima quæ tibi displicent quotidie facientem, et tamen altaris tui servitium quotidie facere præsumentem, non enim possum de tua misericordia desperare. . . . Fateor, ah! fateor, peccator sum, immundus sum, indignus sum; et tamen non recedo a te, dulcissime Jesu! non dimitto te; sed quotidie, etsi infirma et trepida manu, tenebo te. Non recedas a me, donec ab omni contagione peccati absolvas me; et sic corporis et sanguinis tui myeteria participantem, tuæque voluntati jugiter inhœrentem, et præcepta tua*

assidue facientem me perducas ad veram salutem, videlicet ad te verum sacerdotem; ubi cum beatis sacerdotibus tuis ego quoque, tunc non amplius peccator, sed dignus sacerdos et minister tuus, te glorificabo per æterna sæcula. Amen.—(Scut. Fid. t. vi., p. 245.)

I. *Application of the sight.* Behold the holy humanity of Jesus Christ. You have it here in its state of glory, beauty of the body, beauty of the soul. . . . Behold the divinity! What majesty, what greatness, what power, all hid under appearances so common!

II. *Application of the hearing.* Hear the eternal Father saying to you: "*This is My well-beloved Son, hear ye Him?*" How eloquently in this mystery He preaches the contempt of the world, the esteem of God alone, self abnegation, obedience! How admirable the secrets He herein discovers to pure interior souls.

III. *Application of the smell.* The name Christ, which we unite to that of Jesus, creates in us the idea of balm and perfume; what fragrance it spreads, what wonderful charm it imparts to souls, in the meekness, patience, charity of the Son of God. Can any person who communicates often and worthily, fail to spread around the good odor of Jesus Christ?

IV. *Application of the taste.* Everything in this mystery relates to this sense. The Eucharist is a heavenly bread which contains all delights. When we partake of it worthily, we soon experience disgust for all earthly carnal joys.

V. *Application of the touch.* As soon as fire comes in contact with wood it heats and kindles it up; in like manner does the Eucharist act on a soul that receives it holily. If sick persons, by touching the Savior's garments, were perfectly cured, can we fail to recover health when we possess the Savior Himself within us?

XCII. MEDITATION.

FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART—THE HEART OF JESUS CHRIST SPEAKING TO THE HEARTS OF PRIESTS.

1st.—COMPLAINTS OF THE SACRED HEART.

2d.—REQUESTS OF THE SACRED HEART.

3d.—PROMISES OF THE SACRED HEART.

FIRST PRELUDE—Represent to yourself the Savior appearing to each of His ministers, as he did to the blessed Margueret Mary, and saying these words to her: *Behold the heart which has loved men so much, and which is loved by them so little. But that which is most painful to Me is, that I find ungrateful souls amongst the very persons who are consecrated to Me. . . . Thou canst not show Me greater love than by doing what I have asked of you so often. I promise you that My heart will expand in order to pour down abundant benedictions on those who will honor it, and apply their zeal to make it be honored by others.*

SECOND PRELUDE.—Ask for grace to understand well the desires of the heart of Jesus, and to conform yourself to them.

1st Point. *Complaints of the sacred heart of Jesus.* He addresses them to all His ministers.

I. "*Behold this heart.*" Jesus presents it to us; it is His heart. It is the master-piece of the Holy Ghost. "*In Him, dwelleth the plenitude of the divinity corporally.*"—(Col. ii: 9.) It is the organ of the most noble, the most pure, the most sublime affections. It is the heart of the best of Masters, of the most tender of Fathers, of the most sincere of all friends. Was not its goodness very patient toward the apostles, very consoling for the widow of Näim, for the sisters of Lazarus? He is always the same, always ready to feel compassion for those who suffer. O my soul, how well it feels thy miserable state; how full of compassion for so many unfortunate men who lose their souls, notwithstanding its ardent desire to save them!

II. "*Which has loved men so much.*" Notice the words *so much.* He has undoubtedly loved men, He the Savior of all men, since he died for all, since there is not one that cannot say : "*He loved me and gave Himself up for me.*"—(Gal. ii : 20.) But, how much did He love them? Who will understand it, who will declare it? Himself seems not to be able to express it. Recall to mind some of His principal blessings ! Remember the stable, the cross, the altar ! . . . Yes, remember the altar, the mystery of the Eucharist which you have been considering for eight days, and which shall be the object of the eternal admiration of angels and saints ; a God descending from the brightness of His glory to the miserable condition of our humanity, condemning Himself to all humiliations and debasements, in order to lift us up to His throne ; devoting Himself to all kinds of sufferings, in order to deserve for us sovereign happiness ; a God founding the Church that He might abide constantly with us, willing that His flesh should be our food, and His blood our beverage ! . . . Is He not a God who loves infinitely and possesses a claim to infinite love? *O cor infinite amans et infinite amandum !* But if Jesus has loved men so much, tell us, O priest, what rank you occupy amongst those whom He has loved most? Which are your functions in that Church edifice wherein He dwells, wherein He immolates and gives Himself ? What is your share in the favors which He lavishes upon His dearest friends? "*Eat, O friends, and drink and be inebriated, My dearly beloved.*"—(Cant. v : 1.) And now tell us what is the gratitude of men and that of your own self ? For a love so great, what does the heart of Jesus receive?

III. "*And who is so little loved by them.*" These are distressing words. Let us examine no longer that which ought to be, but that which really exists. How great the number of souls that have no knowledge of the generous charity of the heart of Jesus for them ! Count them up. How many others who know this sacred heart, but are not, on that account, any more faithful to return it love for love ! Count up the number of these also. Jesus complains, He looks for consolers. "*I looked for one that would grieve together with Me, but there was none ; and for one that would comfort Me and I found none.*" But, is this true of the sacerdotal tribe, of those whom He distinguished among the rest by bestowing upon them an affection incomparably

more tender? . . . Hear, O priests, the words that follow, and let them penetrate your hearts like sharp pointed arrows.

IV. "*But that which is most painful to Me is, that they who treat Me thus, are hearts which are consecrated to Me.*" Is there a heart as much consecrated to Jesus Christ as the heart of the priest? Who, then, will love Him if the priest does not? . . . . There are, however, many priests who give just occasion to those sorrowful complaints. Not to speak of those who wage open war against Him by profanations and scandals, how many there are who treat Him without respect, without sincere love! . . . . They grow weary in His presence: their tepidity accompanies them on the altar; they have no time to converse with Him after the celebration of Mass. . . . O Jesus, I will acknowledge it to my shame, those reproaches I fully deserve, and a thousand times more. I humbly and truly confess it. I am one of those ungrateful beings of whom Thou didst say: "*Others strike My body only, but these wound My heart, which never ceased to love them.*"

2d Point. *Requests of the heart of Jesus.* "*Thou canst not show Me greater love, than by doing what I have so often asked of thee.*"—(Words of our Lord to blessed Margueret Mary.) Behold the Sovereign God addressing a request. He might command as a master; He does not do so. He prays; He does it earnestly, not being satisfied with one expression of His desire: and what does He ask? He desires in general that His heart be comforted, compensated for the outrages it receives, glorified through our love. "*Our Lord Jesus Christ made me know that the great desire He has to be perfectly loved by men, had required Him to manifest His heart to them, and to give them in these latter days this new pledge of His bounty, by offering to them an object so proper to touch them. . . . He kindly declared to me that He was singularly pleased in seeing His interior sentiments honored under the symbol of this heart of flesh, such as it was shown to me, and that it was His will to have it exposed publicly, in order to touch the hard hearts of men.*" He indicated some special acts of homage which He desired should be offered Him. The institution of a festival, fervent communions, acts of reparation . . . . He made known His intention to an humble nun, quite capable, it seems, to bring about the realization of this design. "The weak things of the world has God chosen." But what does He ask now? What has He been asking of us, His priests,

who are called upon by our vocation to realize the projects of His mercy? Do we practice, do we propagate this sweet devotion, as much as He desires? Did He not inspire us many times to do something more than we do for the glory of His sacred heart? Have you not felt that you ought to consecrate to the sacred heart, either your whole parish or some of its better disposed souls, or that you should have recourse to it with greater confidence, speak of this devotion more fervently and with greater zeal; in the confessional, when attending the sick? . . . . Ah, on this day at least, if we hear the voice of this adorable heart, let us not harden our own! Let us give it this comfort, on the recurrence of this festival particularly consecrated to the reparation of past indifference and profanations. Jesus Christ shall not let devotion to His heart go without reward.

3d Point. *The promises of the heart of Jesus.* Some of these are common to the laity and to us, others relate to the ministries which we exercise for the salvation of souls. "*I promise thee that My heart shall dilate to pour down with abundance the influence of its love, on any one who will honor it, and will exercise his zeal for its honor.*" These words concern all those who glorify the sacred heart, and contribute as much as they can to its glory. She continues: "*If you be in an abyss of weakness, of relapses and miseries, know that the heart of Jesus is an abyss of mercy and strength. If you discover within you excessive pride, unite yourself to the humiliations of the heart of Jesus. . . . I know not of another exercise in the school of spiritual life so proper to elevate a soul to the highest perfection in a short time.*"

But here are words particularly encouraging for us: "*My Savior gave me to understand that they who labor for the salvation of souls shall have grace to touch the most hardened hearts, and that their labors shall be blest with admirable success, if they are themselves penetrated with sincere devotion toward this blessed heart.*" What more can the good priest desire? You desire, whilst saving yourself, to save other souls, and many of them; you desire to arouse consciences most deeply rooted in evil. . . . You know the way to success. Jesus Himself deigned to teach it to you.

O Sacred heart, I adore thee in the august sacrament, which recalls to our minds all the wonders of Thy goodness toward men. Admirable heart, how little loved and known thou art by the very persons whose

glorious mission is to bring all hearts to Thee! Thou shalt be last, and for ever, my refuge in sorrows and difficulties, my hope and my strength in those moments of trouble and anxiety, in which my soul feels ready to succumb under the weight of sadness. Through Thee I will escape the dangers which threaten my salvation, and contribute efficaciously to the salvation of my brethren. Heart of Jesus, thou wert the heart of Paul, of Xavier, and of all apostolic men. Be thou mine also! Come reproduce within me thy humility, thy meekness, thy zeal, and all thy virtues. I again consecrate myself to thee; to thee I dedicate my labors, my sorrows and my joys, my life and the end of my life. And now I turn to Thee, O most Holy Trinity! After blessing Thee for having given me the heart of Jesus, allow me to offer it to Thee. Vouchsafe, I beseech Thee, to accept the reparation it offers Thee, for all the evil I have done, for all the good that I have left undone.

1st Point. *Complaints of the heart of Jesus. Behold this heart.* Study how noble it is and how excellent. . . *Which has loved men so much.* Take notice of the words *so much*, and recall to mind the principal benefits which give evidence of this love, *and which is so little loved by them.* A sad reality! From the greater part Jesus receives only neglect and ingratitude. . . He looks for consolers; does He find any? *But that which is most painful to Me is, that they who thus act toward Me, are hearts which are consecrated to Me!* . . . O Jesus, is there a heart as entirely consecrated to Thee as the heart of a priest?

2d Point. *Requests of the heart of Jesus.* The Sovereign Lord asks; He might command. He prays, He solicits our love, our reparations, our zeal to make Him known and loved. To an humble religious He revealed His desire for the inauguration of a devotion which was to win for Him so many hearts; but does He not to me, His minister, address also some request?

3d Point. *Promises of the heart of Jesus.* My heart will expand and pour down with abundance the influence of its love on any one who will honor it, and aim at obtaining for it honor and respect. "*They who labor for the salvation of souls, will have grace to touch the most hardened hearts.*" We see that there are promises for ourselves, promises for

the success of our labors. She added: "I know not of another exercise of piety so proper as this, to raise souls to a very high perfection in a short time." Let us love this heart which loved us so much, and induce others to love it also.

XCIII. MEDITATION.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—"THIS MAN RECEIVETH SINNERS."—(Vol. 1, p. 306.)

THREE STRIKING EFFECTS OF THE MERCY OF GOD TOWARD SINNERS.

XCIV. MEDITATION.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—FROM HENCEFORTH THOU SHALT CATCH MEN.—(Vol. 1, p. 623.)

THE PRIEST A FISHER OF MEN.

XCV. MEDITATION.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—"EXCEPT YOUR JUSTICE ABOUND MORE THAN THAT OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, YOU SHALL NOT ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.—(Mat. v : 20.)

1st.—GOD EXPECTS THAT HIS PRIESTS WILL ABOUND IN JUSTICE.

2d.—WHEN DO THEY DESERVE THE REPROACHES BESTOWED ON THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES?

1st Point. *God expects that His priests shall abound in justice.* To be convinced of this, it suffices to remember three comparisons used by our Savior when teaching His ministers the obligations which He imposed on them. You are the salt of the earth . . . the light of the world . . . a city built upon a mountain.—(Mat. v : 13, 14.) The Savior, says Cornelius a Lapide, had just made known the eight beatitudes, which are an abridgment of evangelical perfection; He applies them to the apostles and to their successors in office personally.—The first thing He requires of them is, to be the salt of the earth. It is, as if He had said: "*Vos, O apostoli, quos eligo, ut meo exemplo sitis pauperes spiritu, mites, mundo corde, misericordes . . . . hoc ipso erilis sal terræ?*" I have chosen that you may go and remedy the universal corruption. How great the purity and sanctity which you need! You will be the salt of the earth if you speak like oracles, if you live like gods. *Sacerdotes ergo sint sal terræ, ut eam præstent morum integritatem, quæ cæterorum sit censura et disciplina; quod efficient, si loquantur ut oracula, vivant ut numina.*—(Comm. in hoc loc.)—The light of the world. The priest is in the Church, which is a spiritual world, what the sun is in a physical world: *Sicut ergo sol iliuminat cloacas putidas sed ab iis non sordidatur. . . . Ita et tu, O sacerdos, docens hominem carnalem, et eum emundes, sed ab eo nullam labem*

contrahas. Sol est in coelo, sed inde radios spargit in terram, quibus eam illustrat; ita et tu mente sis in cœlis, corpore in terra, ut eam tuo sermone et exemplo virtutis illumines, calefacias et accendas.—(Ib.)—The city placed on a mountain, which cannot be hid, teaches the priest that all eyes are fixed on him, that he is a public man, that he belongs to all, that he is destined to attain the highest perfection. The prophet had said it long ago: "*Get thee up upon a high mountain, thou that bringest good things to Sion, lift up thy voice with strength, thou who bringest good things to Jerusalem.*"—(Is. xl: 9.) O my God, had I often meditated on those words, I should have better understood that sacerdotal zeal ought to raise me above nature, that it demands of me to speak with energy, that it being my duty to guide souls in the way of perfection, nay, of great perfection, I am obliged to walk in that way before them.

The priest should, therefore, possess abundant justice. They continue the work of Jesus Christ, they represent Him, they are His vicars; hence, St. Bernard says to them: *Nonne ea via qua Christus ambulavit, et vos debetis ambulare? Nonne sicut conversatus est, et vos vicarii ejus debetis conversari?* Hear St. Bonaventure: *Vicarius Christi vicem Christi debet gerere, in beneplaciti ejus promotione, in potestatatis ejus auctoritate, et in similitudinis ejus repræsentatione.*—(De sex alis Ser. c. 6.) But what is to be said of those who represent Him by the elevation of their dignity, but work against Him by their disordered or lukewarm life, who retain the authority and power received from His hands, and reject that which is equally essential, viz., an eminent sanctity? Do they not insult Him cruelly by attempting to divide that which of itself is indivisible?

If you will know the nature of this resplendent virtue which the priest is bound to possess, hear St. Gregory Nazianze: *Hæc summa est ut virtute tales existant ut, uno verbo dicam, cœlestes sint: ac possint purgari primum, deinde purgare; sapientia instrui, atque alios sapientes reddere; lumen fieri, et alios collustrare; accedere ad Deum et alios adducere; sanctificari, et aliis sanctificationem afferre.*—(In distichon.)

2d Point. *How priests may deserve to be reprimanded as the Scribes and Pharisees were.* In the 23d chapter of St. Matthew, where Jesus Christ opposes directly those false doctors whose conduct was a

source of scandal to the people, He first of all blames them for showing the way of salvation to others, and not entering it themselves. *They say and do not.* Either do not publish the law of God, if you refuse to fulfill it, or observe it if you preach it. To say and not to do is to contradict oneself; building with one hand and destroying with the other and causing the law to be despised by drawing contempt on him who proclaims it. . . . This vice was common under the synagogue. Is it not often found in the Church? Have I not been guilty in this respect?

The Scribes and the Pharisees, were, moreover, hard toward others, and had no indulgence, save for themselves. "*They bind heavy and insupportable burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders; but with a finger of their own they will not move them.*" There is nothing more opposed to Christian charity and to the spirit of the Savior, who has taken on Himself our infirmities, borne our sorrows, and ever showed Himself full of thoughtfulness and compassion for sinners. . . . It was, however, the pride and hypocrisy of those wicked men which kindled the indignation of the Son of God. "*All their works they do to be seen of men, for they make their philacteries broad, and enlarge their fringes; and they love the first places at feasts, and the first chairs in synagogues and salutations in the market place.*" How many priests, alas, stray from the path of duty through immoderate desire of gaining the esteem of the world! St. Thomas said, after St. Jerome: *Tolle inanem gloriam de clero, et sine labore omnia vitia resecabis.*—(Exp. in h. l.) O priest, man of God, be afraid of vain glory, which destroys purity of intention, and leaves no room for God in the heart. If you are so happy as to be free from that hypocrisy denounced as many as seven times in the course of the same sermon by our Savior, which conceals the most shameful crimes under specious appearances, and makes a whitened sepulchre out of a would be saint, can they say that you are entirely free from another sort of hypocrisy? We speak of those pharisaical dissimulations which keep stricter guard on words than on thoughts, have more regard for the eyes of men, than for the eyes of God; indemnify themselves privately for the restraints of their public life, and conceal culpable imperfections and negligences under a faultless exterior.

1st Point, *God expects that the justice of His priests will be abundant.* The priest is the salt of the earth, the light of the world, a city built upon a mountain. God chose him that he might remedy universal corruption. Should not His purity be very great? The priest is in the Church, what the sun is in the physical world. He ought to enlighten, to warm up souls and to make them fruitful. He should strive to prevent scandals by the sight of his examples. But he, moreover, continues Jesus Christ's work on earth and continues to represent Him. This caused St. Bernard to say: *Nonne ea via qua Christus ambula vit, et vos debetis ambulare?*

2d Point. *How priests may deserve to be reprimanded as the Scribes and Pharisees were.* By pointing out the way of salvation to others, without entering it themselves. *Dicunt et non faciunt;* by being hard to others and too indulgent to themselves; but especially by trying to gain the esteem and consideration of men. "That they may be seen by men." Vain glory is the cause of the loss of many priests. *Tolle inanem gloriam de clero et sine labore omnia vitia resecabis.*

XCVI. MEDITATION.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES.—

(Page 178.)

XCVII. MEDITATION.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—HE THAT DOETH THE WILL OF MY FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN, HE SHALL ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.—(Vol. 1, p. 774.)

XCVIII. MEDITATION.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—THE UNJUST BUT WISE STEWARD—PREPARATION FOR GOD'S JUDGMENT.

1st.—NECESSITY OF THIS PREPARATION.

2d.—HOW TO PREPARE FOR IT.

1st Point. *Prudence demands that I should be prepared for the judgment of God.* This parable is applicable to all men; since they all are, not the owners but the mere administrators of the blessings they received in the order of nature, and in the order of grace; but it applies moreover and more especially to priests and pastors, who have been chosen by the sovereign Master to dispense His richest treasures. "*Dispensers of the mysteries of God.*" *Villicus eum significat cujus officium est in custodiâ et regimine Ecclesiæ.*—(St. Ans. hom. 12.) Priests are pre-eminently the stewards of God. The more grave and important are the interests committed to my care, the more dreadful is the account I shall have to give of my administration. Life, health, talents, a peerless dignity, immense powers, the merits and blood of Jesus Christ. . . . Such are, O my God, the talents Thou willest me to dispose of; to procure Thy glory, reconcile men with Thee, struggle against hell, and save souls, are the affairs Thou hast confided to my management. Alas! dost Thou find in me a faithful steward? Does not the bad use I have made hitherto of Thy gifts accuse me and cry out against me? "*He was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.*"

The steward is summoned to appear before his Master. And He called him. I am liable at any moment to be summoned before my Judge. Am I prepared to meet the accusations He might bring against me?

"*How is it that I hear this of thee?*" I hear nothing but murmurs and accusations against thee; it is a universal cry; from every part

they appeal to my justice, against thy abuse of my favors. The instruction of thy people, visits to the sick, the care of the poor, thy most essential duties, are neglected, my mysteries are treated without respect . . . everything accuses thee of being a steward unfaithful to his trust. I acknowledge it, O my God, with extreme confusion; I have given Thy justice many reasons of complaint: at all the stages of my life, in all the places where I have lived, in all the positions which I occupied, in all the functions or ministries which I fulfilled, I grieved the hearts of my superiors, of my inferiors, of all those with whom I came in contact, by my actions, my omissions, my words, my examples. . . . The heavens and the earth condemn me. Thy mercy, O my God, is my only hope. That mercy I now implore; have pity on me. *Ante diem rationis donum fac remissionis.* To-day I may still appease Thy anger. Will it be in my power to do so to-morrow?

The steward is ordered to give in his accounts, and is deprived of his office. "*Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer.*" What a thunderbolt for a man who lived quietly in his iniquity, thoughtlessly wasting away a property which was not his! He now acknowledges that he has a master whose sacred right he has betrayed, and who will now judge him according to the rigor of the law. He will be deprived of everything; of his office, of all employment, of every means by which he may repair his faults. What shall be left to me at the moment of death? For me all means of salvation shall have disappeared. O my soul, meditate on those words of holy Job:

"*What shall I do when God shall rise to judge; and when He shall examine, what shall I answer Him?*"—(Job. xxxi: 14.) And these others of St. Paul: "*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*"—(Heb. x: 31.) Be ready! thou knowest what eternity awaits thee according to the sentence either favorable or unfavorable, pronounced against thee or in thy favor. There were so many of my brother priests summoned to appear before God, when they least expect it! Will it do to regulate my accounts, when the moment to render them shall have come?

2d Point. *How should I prepare for God's judgment.* This I shall learn from the steward, unjust though he was. . . . What does he do? He begins by thinking seriously on his position. Such is the be-

ginning of every serious conversion. He speaks to himself: "*What shall I do since my master takes away from me my stewardship? To dig I am not able, and to beg I am ashamed.*" Oh! how true it is that pride and the love of comfort are a great obstacle to conversion. Pennance, however, in order to be complete, should affect the body and the mind. The body should be made to suffer, and the spirit ought to be humbled; but pride and immortification prevent us from such a resolve. *Perfectio pœnitentiæ consisti in afflictione et labore corporali, et in humilitate et pudore mentali; et hæc duo recusat animus infirmi hominis.* —(St. Bonav. Exp. in Hom. 1.) Happily for us, God is full of mercy, and in His infinite goodness He opens for us another way of salvation.

In another instruction our Lord had required two things as a preparation for judgment, viz: Passions subdued, and saintly actions, "*Let your loins be girded, and have burning lamps in your hands.*"—(Luc. xii: 35.) But in this place He mentions only alms-giving, judging it so proper to touch the heart of God that it will obtain for us all dispositions necessary to reconcile us with God, and restore to us our rights to the heavenly inheritance. We find in the Scripture that everything is promised to the giving of alms. It delivers us from sin and death, it will not suffer us to fall into eternal darkness.—(Tob. iv: 11.) "*Water quenches flaming fire, and alms resisteth sin.*"—(Eccle. iii: 33.) It procures the greatest blessings that a man may desire, the mercy of God in this life, and endless happiness in the next.—(Tob. xii: 9.) O priests, who so justly dread the judgment of God, do you give alms? Give it in all sorts of manners, give it as abundantly as you can. Enlighten, exhort and console others. Let them give to the soul and to the body. Offer some drops of the blood of Jesus Christ for the relief of the suffering souls of Purgatory; give peace to so many unfortunate persons around you, whose souls are tormented by remorse: they spend their life in pursuit of vain shadows; restore them to the friendship of God. Oh what a charity this would be! You must not forget corporal charity. Be full of compassion for all kinds of miseries, and follow the counsel of St. Ambrose. Do what you can, and sometimes a little more. *Compatiamur alienis infirmitatibus; necessitates aliorum quantum possumus juvemus, et plus interdum quam possumus.*—(De. off min. 1. ii. c. 28.) Alms-giving, says St. Augustine, is the consolation of our faith, the support of our hope, the remedy of sin; through it we obtain

the affection of our judge, and it makes God our debtor.—Oh the power of alms-giving! They whose evils we shall have alleviated, shall become our ushers into the eternal tabernacles.

How welcome, O my God, is the light which this consoling word brings to my soul! I also know now what I will do to conciliate Thy justice; I shall prepare for myself intercessors, and friends, who will speak to Thee in my favor. The multitude of my infidelities, and of my crimes, I will expiate by works of zeal and of charity. Since thou wilt soon come down on the altar and visit Thy unworthy servant; give him, I beseech Thee, a heart more and more compassionate for the various wants of his fellow-beings. Show him plainly all the miseries of the poor and of the indigent in the spiritual and temporal order, so that in the evil day, when to others thou shalt be an inexorable Judge, he may find in Thee his almighty Deliverer. "*Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor, the Lord will deliver him in the evil day.*"—(Ps. xl: 1.)

1st Point. *Prudence requires preparation for the judgment of God.* The unjust steward is accused before his master, of having wasted his goods. Our most formidable accuser at the tribunal of God, will be the Gospel, the graces we received and our own consciences. Priests are pre-eminently the stewards of God, dispensers of the mysteries of God. Oh! how important are the duties He has intrusted to me! At any moment I may be summoned to appear before His tribunal. I have given countless reasons of complaint. O Jesus, the heavens and the earth condemn me! Thy mercy is my only hope.

The steward is deprived of his office. At death every means of salvation will be taken away from me. O my soul, be ready! Thou knowest which of the two eternities await thee according to the sentence that will be pronounced by the Judge.

2d Point. *How must I prepare for judgment?* This I can learn from the steward who knew how to act wisely. He reflects deeply; such is the beginning of every serious conversion. . . . "*To dig I am not able, and to beg I am ashamed.*" Pride and love of an easy sensual life; behold the great obstacles to true penance. He has recourse to

alms-giving. It delivers us from sin and from death. If you fear the judgment of God, do some act of charity. Bestow a thought on those who suffer in body and in mind. The influence of charity is amazing. It makes even God our debtor.

XCIX. MEDITATION.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—THE TEARS OF JESUS CHRIST.

(See page 199.)

C. MEDITATION.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—PRIDE.

1st.—PARTICULAR CHARACTERISTIC OF THIS VICE.

2d.—ITS INCONSTANCY AND FOLLY.

1st Point. *Particular characteristic of pride.* Its affectations to show itself; its false humility.

I. *The affectation of pride.* Christ gives it this pecular characteristic in this day's Gospel. Whilst the humble Publican stands afar off, overcome with the sentiment of his indignity, dares not do so much as to lift up his eyes, the Pharisee goes up nigh to the altar and there you see him standing up. *The Pharisee standing.* From his bearing, the manner of his pretended prayer, they know him to be one who admires himself, and desires to be admired by others. The whole attention of the proud man is to acquire esteem. Study all the details of his conduct, you will discover that in his appearance, his movements, his dress, in everything and everywhere, this man desires to attract the attention of others, to obtain the good will of all. This is undoubtedly his intention.

It is in order to heal or to preserve us from this vice that Thou commandest us, O my Savior, not to seek the eyes of men in the good which we perform ; to pray in secret, not to sound the trumpet when we give alms, not to seek notoriety when we fast and do penance. For this end it is that Thou recommendest us always to sit in the lower place, to consider ourselves as the least of men. . . .Oh blessed maxims, wise lessons ! They are given me by a God, as it were, annihilated ; has He not a right to require that I should model my whole life according to them ? Have I acted thus so far ? Thy priests, O Lord, teach the necessity of humility ; are they always models of this virtue ? Two men go up to the temple ; one of them is, by virtue of his office, bound to give good example, and he gives scandal ; the other, though a sinner, gives edification by his most touching modesty. O Jesus, for many of Thy ministers, the very temple wherein they distribute Thy graces becomes a tribunal at which they are condemned by the example of the faithful over whom they have been appointed judges.

II. If pride loves to show itself, it also at times seeks to conceal itself. On the one hand, the proud wish to shine, to be above others, to be admired ; on the other, they know that if this, their desire, becomes apparent, they will make themselves small, ridiculous, contemptible ; they, therefore, dissimulate their ambition, and affect to act through a sense of duty rather than through a desire for applause. . . . Their endeavors, however, are vain, and one's real character is soon known, when he attempts to play a role contrary to his nature. If people pay no attention to such a man, if they appear to ignore him, his pride will soon manifest itself by some indeliberate outburst, or by silent sadness. . . . Passion often betrays itself through the very precautions it uses, to remain unknown ; when one has so much fear to pass for a proud man, it is an evidence that he is one himself.

III. The garb of humility itself is sometimes used to disguise pride. The Pharisee thanks God. *I return Thee thanks ;* he, therefore, acknowledges God's greatness, His sovereign dominion ; he seems to lower himself in His presence. But wherefore does he return thanks to Him ? Because he is not as the rest of men, because he is free from their vices, and possesses virtues which they do not. . . . Behold pride showing itself in the very act, and through the very act, of adoration and dependence. There is no mistaking it. If you will find out a

proud man, force him to confess that inferiority of which he wears the garb; treat him in the manner which he says he deserves; replace him to the lower rank; his wounded self-love will soon burst out and give more than one evidence of its presence. This vice can be destroyed, but it cannot remain concealed. O my God, do Thou pluck from my heart the last roots of this vice. I have so many reasons to detest it. It is so culpable and baneful, so contrary to the dignity of Thy ministers, and to the spirit which should animate them.

2d Point. *Inconsistency and folly of pride.* Let us consider the Pharisee and the Publican going out of the temple. On which of the two shall we bestow our esteem or our contempt? What has the former obtained by his pompous prayer; what has not the latter gained by humbling himself? Many desire to obtain esteem and notoriety; but how false their calculations, when they hope to succeed by exhibiting their importance. Whoever praises himself, save in matters that are really laudable, loses at once, in the minds of those who hear him, the good opinion they had of him. The moment he shows a desire to occupy the first place, in my mind, I give him the very last one. There is but one way to real glory, and that is to fly from it. *He who humbleth himself shall be exalted;* and the way to incur contempt, is to seek after glory. *He who exalteth himself shall be humbled.* Blind as the world is, it only esteems the merit which has but contempt for its approbation and favors. We say, therefore, that pride is not only a crime but a folly. It is as opposed to reason as lying to truth, night to daylight. What should we say of a dwarf who would think himself to be a giant, because he sees himself on the top of a mountain, who would fancy himself taller than it because he beholds it under his feet? Such is, says St. John Chrysostom, the folly of the proud man; he delights and swells up at the thought that he is superior to others, that all the rest of men are inferior to himself. There is, however, this difference, says the same doctor, that the former's folly being due solely to a derangement of the organs, excites us to compassion as well as to laughter; but the folly of the second, being deliberate, excites naught but the indignation of God and men. "*Pride is hateful before God and men.*" —(Eccle. x: 7.)

Hence it is that we find so many maledictions pronounced against this detestable vice in the Scripture. As it attempts more directly than

any other vice, to deprive God of the glory which belongs to Him alone, and which He will concede to no other, it necessarily provokes more dreadful punishments against him who is a slave to it. "*The Lord . . . . will repay them abundantly that act proudly.*"—(Ps. xxx : 24.) Abundance of chastisements shall repay abundance of sins ; do they not all spring from pride? "*He that holdeth pride shall be filled with maledictions.*"—(Eccle. x : 15.) But the special malediction attached to this vice is shame and opproprium. "*Where pride is, there also shall be reproach.*"—Prov. xi : 2.) Woe to pride! "*God hath scattered the bones of them that please men ; they have been confounded because God has despised them.*"—(L. ii : 6.) He casts them down at the very moment that they were rising. "*When they were lifted up, Thou hast cast them down.*"—(Ps. lxvii : 18.) Their elevation becomes their ruin : "*Elevatio ipsi ruina est.*"—(St. Aug. in h. l.) Hence, in the language of God, that is an abyss of folly, which the world calls aggrandizement, and height of glory : "*Till a pit be dug for the wicked.*"—(xciii : 13.) What then is the Lord doing when He permits this man to succeed, at least apparently, according to his desires? He permits him to dig his own grave : "*Hoc se ille putat sublimiter ire et hoc Deus foveam vocat.*"—(St. Aug. Ib.) St. Gregory of Nyssa gives the definition of pride, as *Ad inferiora desensus ;* and he says elsewhere : *Qui recedit a Deo, in profundum it.* Ah, what a degradation in a Christian, and much more in a priest, when he so far forgets his dignity as to go begging the approbation of worldlings! Proud men will be punished in that very thing by which they sinned, the more they desire honors, the more deeply will they be confounded. The oracle sees its accomplishment *even* in this world. *He that exalteth himself shall be humbled.* But think of them at the general judgment, and during all eternity? Let them hear what the Lord says to them : "*I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame which shall never be forgotten.*"—(Jerme. xxiii : 40.)

O God, since Thou justifiest the sinner who humbles himself, and reproachest the proud man who is senseless enough to depend upon his justice, I address to Thee the prayer of the Publican : *Be merciful to me, a sinner.* I acknowledge myself as he did, unworthy to lift up my eyes and appear before Thee ; but have compassion on my unworthiness May this prayer, which I know from the Gospel to be so effica-

cious, make up for the defects of so many other prayers which remain unanswered, simply for the reason that they were wanting in humility. I will often offer it to Thee ; being convinced that it will touch Thy heart and obtain mercy for me ; this prayer I shall repeat with a still greater confidence, when, after a moment, I shall have received the adorable sacrament which contains a specific virtue to repress or to cure all the elations of our pride : "*O medicinam omnia tumentia comprimentem ! Quæ superbia sanari potest, si humilitate Filii Dei non sanatur ?*"—(St. Aug. de Agone Christi.)

1st Point. *Particular characteristic of pride.* It affects to show itself. The humble Publican stands afar off ; the Pharisee goes up to the foot of the altar. They perceive in his carriage, in the mode of his so-called prayer, that he admires himself, and wishes to be admired. The very garb of humility is used at times to disguise pride.

2d Point. *Inconsistency and folly of pride.* What did the Pharisee obtain through his pompous prayer? What of the Publican who humbled himself ? Blind as the world is, it only esteems the merit which has but contempt for its suffrages. What should we say of a man who would think himself to be a giant, because he stood on the top of a mountain ? What does the proud man obtain by seeking esteem and notoriety ? He is despised by men, cursed and dreadfully punished by the Almighty. To Thee, O my God, I address the prayer of the Publican : "*Have mercy on me, a sinner.*"

CI. MEDITATION.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—HE HATH DONE ALL THINGS WELL.—(Vol. 1, page 512.)

TO DO WELL WHAT WE DO, IS A SURE MEANS TO PROGRESS RAPIDLY IN VIRTUE.

CII. MEDITATION.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

1st.—JESUS CHRIST PORTRAYED HIMSELF IN THE PERSON OF THE GOOD AMARITAN.

2d.—HE WILLS THAT HIS DISCIPLES, AND ESPECIALLY HIS PRIESTS, IMITATE HIS CHARITY.

1st Point. *Jesus Himself is the good Samaritan.*—(Luc. x: 30.) After considering the sad state of the unfortunate traveler, and the hard-heartedness of the priest and the Levite, let us admire the charity of the good Samaritan. It portrays faithfully the conduct of Jesus Christ towards us. "*A certain Samaritan, being on his journey, came near him.*" Why did the Son of God come down amongst men? His love alone prompted Him to undertake this journey. *Amoris actus impetu.* He knew to what a deplorable state sin had reduced us. He knew of what blessings we had been deprived by it, the wounds it had inflicted in our souls. If he had not

come we should have had to suffer the most frightful death, for hell would have been our lot. He also knew that we were more guilty than unfortunate; for we were rebellious slaves, standing up in arms against Him, bent on persevering in our rebellion. . . . In these circumstances it was that He came near us, not in order to punish or destroy, as justice required it, but in order to reconcile us with Him and to save us. He clothed Himself with our infirmities in order to heal them; assumed our debts in order to pay them, and our crimes in order to expiate them. As many grievous sins we have committed, so many mortal wounds we have inflicted on our souls; and behold this generous friend comes and binds up our sores with His grace. The good Samaritan, moved with compassion at the sight of the unfortunate man weltering in his blood, goes up to him and bandages his wounds, pouring in oil and wine. This is not all; he stays with him the remainder of the day, and the whole following night. His business may perhaps suffer from the delay; he does not mind it; his great affair now is, to assist a man who will soon die unless he receives immediate help. Being obliged to leave him, he provides for the future, recommending him to the innkeeper, to whom he leaves some money. He orders that nothing be spared in order to bring about his recovery, promises that at his return he will pay in full all expenses. But how faint the figure is, compared with the reality! As soon as our Lord came to us and saw our miseries, what did He not do to remedy them? Did He set any bounds to His compassion? He sacrificed all for us. His goods, His rest, His reputation, His very life. Nay, when He died, He forsook us not, He confided us to His Church, in whose hands He deposited His treasures. He commissioned His ministers to take care of us; and will reward them magnificently for all they shall have done for our souls.

Had I been in the place of this man, what would have been my feelings toward my deliverer? Would I have neglected one single occasion to show him my gratitude? My life, which he had preserved, I would have freely spent in his service. . . . O my soul, is not this the very thing which thou owest? Dost thou not owe still more to Jesus, thy Savior, and thy God "*Who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction . . . who satisfieth thy desire with good things.*" —(Ps. cii: 3, 4, 5.) Do thou "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never for-

get all He has done for thee." But is it enough to bless Him? Hear Him and He will tell what He expects of thy gratitude. "*Go and do thou in like manner.*" Do thou for others what He has done for thee.

2d Point. *Jesus wills that His disciples, and particularly His priests, should imitate His charity toward their neighbor.* There is not another point of the Divine law to which our Lord reverts so often in His instructions. Now He declares that with us God will make use of the same measure we shall have used to mete out to our brethren; that as much as we shall have been merciful to others, so much will He be merciful to us. He declares at another time, that our love should extend to those very persons who hate us, if we will be the children of the heavenly Father who does good to the wicked as to the good, etc. It may be said that he spoke of this obligation in season, and out of season. When asked which is the first of all the commandments, He answers the question directly; but immediately adds without being asked: The second is like unto the first, to love our neighbors as ourselves. He does more still; He adopts it, makes it His own personal commandment. On what occasion? On the eve of His death, when speaking for the last time to His apostles in an outpouring of the most tender friendship; never before had His language borne the impress of so tender an affection. "*Little children, yet a little while I am with you.*" I have but a few moments to spend with you, and these I employ in repeating to you what I recommended to you so often. Love one another as I have loved you. . . . This is my commandment, the commandment which I most desire that you should observe. "*This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. . . . This I command you to do. By this sign will the world know that you are my disciples.*" After those pressing recommendations, He raises His eyes to heaven and prays, in the first place for His apostles and His priests and then for all those who through them were to believe in Him. What is the particular object of His prayer for all of them? "*That they may be one, as Thou Father in me and I in Thee;*" that they may be one through mutual love, as we are one by nature. O blessed union of all hearts, the image of the unity of one God in three persons! O fraternal charity, so dear to the heart of Jesus Christ! The function of the priesthood is to establish, to preserve and make thee perfect on earth.

It is, however, above all, in their conduct toward sinners that priests find in this parable an admirable model. The good Samaritan overcomes the natural reluctance he feels at the sight he had under his eyes ; he draws near. In like manner desperate and repulsive as may seem to be the state of a soul given up to sin, the good priest is very cautious not to forsake it ; he draws near it as much as he can, endeavors to gain its confidence. After this first success, he bandages the sores of this poor soul ; goes first of all to the very root of the evil, and begins by putting a stop to the course of his vicious habits ; a cure would be impossible as long as the blood would continue to ooze out of the wounds, he pours on them oil and wine, symbols of kindness and of strength, which he knows how to use equally well. He does more than dressing the sores, he withdraws him from the occasion of danger, and puts him in a place of safety. He continues to care for him, either in person or through others ; he strengthens, encourages, comforts him in his pains, entertains him in his good desires, puts an end to his waverings by solidly uniting him to God. One cannot tell how much of patience and circumspection is to be used by the spiritual doctor in this convalescence of souls.

St. Bernard thanked God, because he had poured down on his soul more oil than wine ; the adorable doctor acts in like manner regarding our infirmities. Am I also particularly kind, patient and compassionate in treating my diseased sheep ?

In preparing myself for Mass, I shall beg pardon of Jesus Christ for having so ill-observed His precept ; and principally that part of it which regards zeal for the salvation of stray souls. He gives me His heart every day, in the celebration of the holy mysteries. When, at last, shall I participate in His tender charity for sinners ?

1st Point. *Jesus Christ is the good Samaritan of the Gospel.* Why did He come down on earth, and come near us? He knew the sad condition sin had reduced us to. He came near us not to punish, but to heal and save us. For us He sacrificed all, repose, reputation, life itself. He confided us to the Church, commanded His ministers to care for us, promising them an immense reward for their labors. Do thou, then, O my soul, bless the Lord, and never forget what thou hast received of His goodness.

2d Point. *Jesus wills that His disciples, but particularly His priests, imitate His charity.* There is no doctrine to which He reverts so often as to that of charity; He continually reminds us of this capital obligation. The commandment of fraternal charity He adopts as His commandment. "Love one another, as I have loved you. . . this is my commandment." O blessed union of all hearts, the image of the unity of God in three persons. Thou dost begin on earth the society of the elect. This parable above all, offers for my imitation a model of the conduct I should hold toward sinners.

CIII. MEDITATION.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—WERE NOT TEN MADE CLEAN AND WHERE ARE THE NINE?—(Luc. xvii: 17.)

Ungratefulness

~~UNGRATEFULNESS~~ TOWARD GOD.

1st.—ITS NATURE.

2d.—GREATNESS OF THIS SIN.

3d.—ITS BANEFUL EFFECTS.

1st Point. *Nature of ingratitude toward God.* This vice is quite the opposite of gratitude. This virtue induces us to accomplish three duties: to remember the benefaction, thank the benefactor, and make a good use of His blessings. These three duties were accomplished perfectly by the leper, whose gratitude is presented as a model for our imitation. As soon as he feels himself healed, he turns his mind, his heart and his steps also, toward Him to whom he is indebted for so great a blessing. "*When he saw that he was made clean, he went back.*" He glorifies God aloud. "*With a loud voice, glorifying God.*" He falls at the feet of Jesus Christ, as it were, to declare his attachment, and to consecrate to His service the health He restored to him. "*He fell on his face before His feet, giving thanks.*" The man ungrateful to God does quite the contrary. Instead of being mindful of the graces he has re-

ceived, he forgets them; instead of thanking the Lord for them, he does not acknowledge that he received them from Him, and attributes them to himself; instead of employing them to serve Him, he makes a bad use of them to offend Him.

In seeing those ten lepers going to meet the Savior, standing off at a distance through respect, and asking Him so fervently to notice them —"*Jesus, Master, have mercy on us*"—one would have thought, that in case they were heard, nothing could efface from their minds the recollection of a favor so ardently desired. Yet, scarcely have they received it, than all of them except one have forgotten it. The very enjoying of the blessing, and the pleasure annexed to this enjoyment, banish from their minds the remembrance of their benefactor. God often reproached His people for this criminal ingratitude.[1] Alas, do we not deserve the same reproach? If we think on the blessings we enjoy, we pay no attention to the source it comes from. Instead of giving thanks to God for it, we attribute it to ourselves. "*There is no one found to return and give glory to God.*" We may not have the impudence to say: "*Our mighty hand and not the Lord hath done all these things.*"—(Deut. xxxii: 27), but we pretend we are entitled to at least a share in the success together with the Almighty God. Man in his pride wishes he was indebted to no one save to himself; but not being able to gain this point, he endeavors to lessen his indebtedness. But the height of ingratitude is to outrage one's benefactor, and to turn His own gifts against Him. This is another reproach which God addresses to His people: "*Thou hast not called upon Me, O Jacob, neither hast thou labored about Me, O Israel; thou hast not offered Me the ram of the holocaust . . . but thou hast made Me serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied Me with thy iniquities.*"—(Is. xliii: 22, 23, 24.) Ah, how common on earth, nay, amongst the ministers of God themselves, is this profanation of the gifts of God; are there many priests who would dare say: None of the talents or goods which God has granted me, did I ever use in the service of vanity, secret ambition, or any other disorderly passion.

2d Point. *Ingratitude toward God is a crime.* The ungrateful man robs Almighty God of the only tribute that He can and is willing to receive from His intelligent creatures. These are the words of the Lord: "*Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify to thee, I am God, thy God.*"—(Ps. xlix: 7.) Hear My people;

thou canst but acknowledge that I am thy God, and that having received of Me thy being and all that thou possessest, justice demands of thee to manifest thy gratitude by some offering. But what wilt thou offer to Me? I have no need of temples or of victims. . . . What canst thou offer to Me that I do not already possess? One thing I wish to receive from thee: a sacrifice of praise in acknowledgment of My benefactions. "*Offer to God the sacrifice of praise, and render homage to the Most High.*"—(Ib.) But this is precisely what the ungrateful man refuses to God.

This is not all; if it were in the power of the ungrateful man so to do, God would be deprived of all the fruits of His works in the creation and preservation of the material world. Faith and reason unite in demonstrating that God, the First, the Infinite Being, can act for no other end but for His own glory. "*The Lord hath made all things for Himself.*"—(Prov. xvi: 4.) Senseless creatures praise Him, each in their own way; and we may apply to all, that which the Prophet King said of the heavens: "*The heavens proclaim the glory of God.*" They have no tongue to speak with, but their beauty, their usefulness, invite man for whom they are made, to bless, to praise and thank their common benefactor. When man does not do so, he deprives God, as far as he can, of the fruits of His labors; he prevents His creatures from accomplishing their ends, and makes himself a useless being, for he was created for no other purpose but to lend them his voice, and enable them to glorify the Lord.

Finally, ingratitude amounts to the denial of God. For the ungrateful man, God is no longer that adorable source whence all good flows, and that last end to which everything should turn. He wickedly substitutes himself to the first principle, claiming the advantages he enjoys as if they came from himself, glorifying himself on their account, instead of giving glory to God for them. Such, says St. Augustine, is the essence of pride, and of ungratefulness which springs from it: *Quid est superbia, nisi perversæ celsitudinis appetitus? Perversa enim celsitudo est, deserto eo cui animus adhærere debet principio, sibi quodam modo fieri atque esse principium.* Should we wonder on hearing the same doctor say to God: "*Scio quod ingratitudo multum tibi displiceat.*"—(Solil. 18.) St. Bernard also says: "*Nihil ita displicet Deo, præsertim in filiis gratiæ. . . quemadmodum igratitudo?*"—(Serm. de 7 Mis.) O priest,

you are not only the sons of grace, you are the fathers of it, since you produce it in the souls of your fellow-men ; much more guilty would you be than the simple faithful, were you addicted to a vice already so horrible in them.

3d Point. *Baneful effects of ingratitude toward God.* St. Bernard says that this hateful vice is the great enemy of the soul, the annihilation of its merits, the ruin of its virtues, the loss of the blessings it had received. It is a burning wind, which dries up and exhausts the source of heavenly blessings : "*Ingratitudo. . . ventus urens, siccans fontem pietatis, rorem misericordiæ, fluenta gratiæ.*"—(Serm. 51 in Cant.) It is a perversity which takes away former graces, and prevents the receiving of others ; for an ungrateful man deserves to lose what he possesses, and deserves not to obtain what he needs. The holy doctor illustrates his idea by the following comparisons : If you oppose to a river an obstacle which will prevent it from flowing down to the sea, what shall be the consequence ? In the first place the water of the river will become corrupt *Fluminis aqua si stare cœperit, et ipsa putrescet ;* and in the next place, the water coming from above shall be repelled back : *Et aqua superveniens repelletur.* Such is the fate of the ungrateful soul. Its wicked disposition prevents the graces which it had received from going whither they tended, viz., to procure the glory of God and its own sanctification. Through its negligence these gifts are entirely lost ; but, moreover, the flowing of other graces has been prevented. God refuses to give to that soul new favors which He had destined for it, and of which it rendered itself unworthy : "*Sic plane gratiarum decursus cessabit, si recursus non fuerit : non modo nihil augetur ingrato, sed et quod acceperat vertitur ei in perniciem.*"—(St. B. Ibid.) Thence the Lord said to Jerusalem : "*Because thou hast forgotten Me and hast cast Me behind thy back, bear thou also thy wickedness.*" —(Exech. xxiii : 35.) And what is this punishment ? God teaches us it through Osee the prophet : "*I will not add any more to have mercy on the house of Israel, but I will utterly forget them.*"—(Os. i : 6.) A terrible punishment, which leads to eternal reprobation.

Let us dread the baneful effects of ingratitude and the sin which is annexed to it, especially when the ungrateful one is a priest. In order to preserve us from it, let us often think of our vocation, and of the graces connected with it ; or let us, rather, according to the counsel of

St. Paul, offer continually to God a sacrifice of praise on the altar of our heart.—"*Let us offer the sacrifice of praise always to God.*"—(Heb. xiii : 15), so that our fidelity to return thanks may ever draw down on us new and more excellent blessings : "*Ut de preceptis numeribus gratias exhibentes, beneficia potiora sumanus.*"—(Missal.)

1st Point. *Nature of ingratitude toward God.* It is the opposite of gratitude. Gratitude demands of men to remember the benefaction ; to thank the benefactor, and to make good use of his gifts. Such was the conduct of the healed leper. The ungrateful man does quite the contrary. He remembers not the gifts ; has no acknowledgment for the benefactor ; outrages Him by using against Him the gifts received at His hands. This criminal profanation of the gifts of God, is unfortunately common.

2d Point. *Greatness of the sin of ingratitude.* The ungrateful man robs God of the only tribute He cares to receive from His intelligent creatures. "I have no need," says the Lord, "either of your gifts or of your victims ; one thing only do I desire of you : it is a sacrifice of praise in return for My blessing." All creatures, nay, the senseless ones themselves, proclaim the glory of God, and invite us to bless Him ; if we do it not, as far as in us lies, we deprive God of the fruit of His labors. The ungrateful man substitutes himself to the first principle, attributing to himself the advantages which he really enjoys or imagines that he possesses.

3d Point. *Baneful effects of ingratitude.* According to St. Bernard it is a burning wind which dries up the dew of Divine graces, and exhausts the source thereof. "*Ungrateful city,*" says the Lord to Jerusalem, "*because thou hast forgotten Me, I will forget thyself also !*" . . . A dreadful punishment which leads to reprobation.

CIV. MEDITATION.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—BE NOT SOLICITOUS, SAYING WHAT SHALL WE EAT, ETC. THE GOOD PRIEST HONORS PROVIDENCE.—(Vol. 1, p. 470.)

CV. MEDITATION.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—BEHOLD A DEAD MAN WAS CARRIED OUT—DEATH.—(Vol. 1, p. 244.)

CVI. MEDITATION.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—SIT DOWN IN THE LOWEST PLACE—HUMILITY NECESSARY TO APOSTOLIC MEN.

(Vol. 1, p. 412.)

CVII. MEDITATION.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH THY WHOLE HEART—THE LOVE OF GOD.—(Vol. 1, p. 783.)

CVIII. MEDITATION.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—BEHOLD THEY BROUGHT TO HIM ONE SICK WITH THE PALSY—CARE OF THE SICK.

(Vol. 1, p. 663.)

CIX. MEDITATION.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—THE EUCHARISTIC BANQUET.

1st.—IT FAR SURPASSES IN EXCELLENCE ALL THE BANQUETS OF THE WORLD.

2d.—THE MYSTICAL ROBE TO BE WORN AT THIS BANQUET BY THE PRIESTS.

1st Point. *The Eucharistic banquet to be preferred by far to all the banquets of the world.* Who gives this banquet? *The immortal King of ages.* He united His Son to the Church with indissoluble bonds; the Eucharistic supper is the mystical feast. God it is who entertains, and He entertains as God. Isaias had had a glimpse of the magnificence of this banquet, and he said: "*The Lord of hosts shall make unto all people in this mountain a feast of fat things, a feast of wine, of fat things full of marrow.*"—(Is. xxv: 6.) The Church, made up of men of all nations, calls all her children around this table prepared for them by her adorable spouse. It uses your voice, O priest, to invite them to partake of it. She commands you to instruct, to urge them, to use with them, if necessary, a sort of holy violence, that they may enter the hall of the nuptial feast. "*Go ye into the highways, and as many as you shall find, call to the marriage.*"—(Mat. xxii: 9.) "*Go out quickly into the lanes and streets of the city.*"—(Luc. xiv: 21.) "*Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in.*"—(Ib.) Ah, did men know the honor and blessings which Jesus Christ offers them when He says: "*Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you,*" (Prov. ix: 5), how ardently they would hasten toward the house of God, to receive therein the heavenly gift at your hands! *O sacrum convivium, in quo Christus sumitur, recolitur memoria passionis ejus, mens impletur gratia, et futuræ gloriæ nobis pignus datur!*

Consider each of those words, endeavor to understand them yourself, and explain to the laity the differences which exist between the Eucharistic banquet and the most attractive feasts of the world.

These latter ones are profane festivities; they seek neither the glory of God nor the eternal happiness of man. The banquet of Jesus is sacred: *O sacrum convivium!* Everything in it is calculated to glorify God and to sanctify souls, for nothing contributes as much as communion to make us advance in holiness.

The banquets of the world are much praised and sought after, when they present a great variety of eatables. These are desired to be in such abundance that the taste of every guest may be satisfied; and as there is no kind of food on earth that contains in itself all sweetness, neither is there any dish that can, of itself, procure full satiety. At the banquet of Jesus, only one kind of food is served, and that is Jesus Himself: *In quo Christus sumitur.* This bread of life which *came down from heaven*, this treasure of infinite value, and the principle of all good, contains eminently in itself all that the heart of man can desire. Far better than the manna, which was the figure of it, it procures to the just the most pure delights, and satisfies the noble cravings of the soul. "*What have I in heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth?*"—(Ps. lxxii: 25.)

In the feasts of the world they speak not of death, of pains and afflictions; they will hear nothing but what flatters inclination to pleasure. In the Eucharist banquet everything speaks of the death and passion of the Son of God. We recall them to our memory: *Recolitur memoria passionis ejus.* On one hand this recollection is bitter, but on the other it is full of sweetness. "*He loved me, and gave Himself up for me.*" How useful it is, especially through the sentiments which it inspires, the virtues it engenders and brings up to perfection.

They retire from profane feasts with a body overcharged with surfeiting, a soul nearly always defiled by some sin, and a mind incapable of application. But on the contrary, how great the profit which the interior man draws from holy communion! He receives there, not one grace, but the plentitude of graces, and the very source of all graces: *Mens impletur gratia.*

Hence comes another difference which is the consequence of the others. Whilst profane banquets, through the excesses and sins which are there committed, do often occasion the loss of the body and that of the soul, a pious participation in the Eucharistic banquet saves the whole man, and is a pledge of our predestination: *Et futuræ gloriæ*

nobis pignus datur. "A well-received communion is a letter of recommendation to heaven."—(P. C. Lallemant.) As this sacred meat sanctifies the body as well as the soul, it impresses upon us a seal of life everlasting, whenever we partake of it worthily, "*He that eateth my flesh and drinketh My blood hath life everlasting,*" and deposits within our flesh a germ of glorious resurrection, "*And I will raise him up at the last day.*" Did you initiate souls into the knowledge of these spiritual treasures with which a worthy communion enriches them? Did you meditate on it sufficiently for yourself? For you were not simply commissioned to invite your brethren and prepare them for the feast of the great King, and to do the honors of His table as His minister; you are the very first of the guests, and if none receives the heavenly bread save at your hands, neither is there any one that eats it save after you. What do you owe Jesus Christ under this two-fold consideration?

2d Point. *What sort of nuptial garment should the priest wear at the Eucharistic banquet?* Shall the sanctuary be profaned by the very man appointed to guard it? . . . We have considered elsewhere the enormity of this crime, the crime of a sacrilegious Mass! We may, from the Gospel of this day, conjecture what shall be its punishment: "*Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?* . . . *then the King said to the waiters: bind his hands and feet and cast him into exterior darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" This wedding garment is charity; but how perfect should it not be in the privileged friend of Jesus, who ascends the altar every day and participates every day in the sacred banquet! The heart of the faithful may be compared to those inns along the highway wherein the king stops but rarely; in them he does not expect to find splendor, and is satisfied with what is necessary for a traveller; the case is different about the palace which he built and furnished to be his habitual dwelling; everything there should be magnificent as becomes a king. Your soul, O priest, is the palace of the King of the universe; He lavished on it the riches of His grace, so as to adorn it with all the virtues. Can you think that He will be pleased if He find in it none but common, ordinary dispositions and virtues? The holy doctors declare that you should be resplendent with holiness, as the sun is resplendent with brightness; that having been preferred to angels for the discharge of functions so heavenly, your life ought to be more angelical than human. Meditate

on the teaching of the Church in the Council of Trent : "*Si necessario fatemur nullum aliud opus adeo sanctum ac divinum a Christi fidelibus tractari posse, quam hoc ipsum tremendum mysterium . . . satis etiam apparet omnem operam et diligentiam in eo ponendam esse, ut quanta maxima feri poterit interiori cordis munditia et puritate, atque exteriori devotionis ac pietatis specie peragatur.*"—(Sess. xxii.)

To the language of words, the Church adds that of deeds and figures. Before it permits us to exercise the most sublime of our functions it leads us to a sacred place wherein are deposited the insignia of our office of sacrificers. Here, as it were, in the entrance-hall of heaven, it prepares us to appear before the throne of God. Through the signification attached to the blessed vestments which will soon adorn our person, the Church offers us a striking image of her spouse, such as He was during His passion. The amice cincture, maniple, stole, everything gives token of the humiliations and sufferings of Jesus. She would fain clothe His representative with the innocence and purity represented by the alb, and with charity, of which the chasuble is an emblem. . . . In every manner, she reminds us that eminent holiness is required to enter the holy of holies.

Alas, how do they prepare themselves for the holy sacrifice, and the secred banquet which completes it? Why do they not find in priests, save in the more interior ones, this wholesome fear which, far from excluding confidence, becomes its strongest foundation? "I fear," says P. Berthier, "lest the adorable Victim who is so often in my hands, may rise up one day against me, and put the seal on my reprobation. In order to incur this misfortune, it is not necessary to fall into shameful crimes, to entirely ignore the principles of religion. . . . A lukewarm, easy, sensual life, views exclusively human in the general run of my actions, a heart void of God's presence in prayer, a multitude of profane business and of useless conversations, enterprises of interest or ambition, an almost continual neglect of Christian mortification. . . . extreme sensibility regarding anything connected with the esteem of the world, finally, a great self-love and little love for God, suffice to precipitate a priest into the bottom of the abyss."—(Ref. Spirit., c. x, 1st Ep. to the Corint.)

Examine yourself regarding a point of so great importance, and follow the advice given you by St. Ambrose : "*Mutet vitam qui vult*

accipere vitam ; nam si non mutat vitam, ad judicium accipiet vitam." (Serm. Dom. iv : adv.)

1st Point. *Excellence of the Eucharistic banquet.* God it is who entertains, and He entertains as God. "*Come, He says, eat My bread ; drink the wine which I have mingled for you.*" *O sacrum convivium.* Why *sacrum ?* Because everything here is holy, principally the meat. *In quo Christus sumitur*, and the admirable facts it brings to our recollection : *Recolitur memoria passionis ejus.* What abundance and plenitude of graces we receive at this banquet : *Mens impletur gratia.* The worthy, frequent reception of this sacrament, is a certain pledge of our predestination : *Et futuræ gloriæ nobis pignus datur.* Every well-received communion is, as it were, a letter of recommendation for heaven.

2d Point. *What sort of nuptial garment should the priest wear at this banquet ?* Sanctifying grace or charity suffice to avoid committing a frightful profanation ; but how perfect should not this charity be in the privileged friend of Jesus? The soul of the faithful may be compared to an inn wherein the king lodges only occasionally, and for a short time. Your soul, O priest, is the palace of the great King of heaven. *Solaribus radiis puriorem esse oportet animam sacerdotis.* You have been preferred to angels for the performing of an action so heavenly. Your life ought to be more angelical than human. Remember what the Church does, that she may send up to the altar no person but him who possesses eminent sanctity.

CX. MEDITATION.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—THE MAN BELIEVED THE WORD WHICH JESUS SAID TO HIM—POWER OF FAITH.—(Vol. 1, p. 343.)

CXI. MEDITATION.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—USING THE PRIESTLY TALENT.

"*The kingdom of heaven is likened to a King who would take an account of His servants.*"—(Mat. xviii : 23.) This parable may be united to the one contained in the 25th chapter of the same Gospel of St. Mathew. Both apply to priests so naturally, that Origen thought himself entitled to say : "*Servi hi soli sunt qui dispensatores verbi habentur, et quibus hoc es commissum, ut negotientur et fenerent.*"—(Tract 7 in Mat.)

1st.—WHAT TALENT WAS CONFIDED TO US THROUGH OUR PRIESTLY CONSECRATION.

2d.—BLESSEDNESS OF THE PRIEST WHO TRADETH FAITHFULLY WITH THE TALENT HE HAS RECEIVED.

3d.—MISFORTUNE OF THE PRIEST WHO HIDES IT IN THE EARTH.

1st Point. *What was the talent confided to me on the day of my ordination?* Encomiums and rewards are decreed to the good use that one makes of gifts received, and not to the great number and excellence of those gifts ; but the more numerous and excellent they are, the greater is the responsibility of the recipient. What then shall I say of my responsibility ? If, owing to the natural and purely human talents which I have received, I shall be subjected to a rigorous account, what must I think of the heavenly talent attached to my priestly consecration ?

It is a general law of God's providence, that when He calls a person to an office, He grants him the graces necessary to accomplish it worthily. With an infinite wisdom He proportions the means to the end. The end of the priest's mission is none else than that of Jesus Christ's. "*As the living Father sent me, so do I send you.*" What graces and powers does he not need, who must continue the work of the redemption ; propagate the knowledge and love of God, defend and comfort the Church, sanctify and save immortal souls? What do the holy doctors say on this subject : "*Potestas sacerdotis est sicut potestas divinarum personarum.*"—(St. Ber. Sen. serm. xx.) "*Sacerdotibus datum est, ut potestatem habeant, quam Deus optimus neque Archangelis datam esse voluit : neque enim ad illos dictum est : Quodcumque ligaveritis super terram,* etc."—(St. Chrys. lib. 3 de Sacerd. iv.)

Here are the words of St. Thomas : "*Deus posuit Ordinem in Ecclesia, ut quidam aliis sacramenta traderent, suo modo Deo in hoc assimilati, quasi Deo cooperantes : sicut in corpore naturali quædam membra aliis influunt.*"—(Sum. Sup. quæst. 34.)

Thou didst indeed, O Lord, confide to me the richest and most precious of all talents, when Thou didst admit me to the honor of announcing Thy word, of blessing Thy people, presiding at prayer, remitting sins ; but especially of offering Thyself in sacrifice for the living and the dead : "*Sacerdotum oportet offerre, benedicere, præesse, prædicare et baptizare.*"—(Pont.) When hanging on Thy cross, Thou didst look up to heaven in order to glorify Thy Father on His throne, Thou didst turn Thy eyes to the earth in order to sanctify men who dwell on it ; and Thou didst also look down into limbo in order to free the souls of the just detained there ; thus likewise should Thy minister act in his different functions, but principally at the holy altar. Heaven, earth and purgatory are expecting to see what use he will make of his talents. Let him also consider how important it is for him to use them properly.

2d Point. *Blessedness of the priest who uses faithfully the talent he has received.* He is blessed on earth through that fidelity itself ; but what of the eternal happiness which shall be its reward in heaven? When he relates to God alone the gifts which he acknowledges to have received from Him, he is not dazzled by their excellence nor lifted up in the mind by the praises bestowed upon him ; humble in time of success ; firm in the midst of contradictions and trials ; his zeal

ever tranquil does ever enjoy the sweets of peace. Is there not much comfort in the thought: "My life is spent in the service of God and of my neighbor; no ambition do I have or wish to have, save to glorify the Lord, and to prepare creatures which He loves to glorify Him eternally by participating in His sovereign felicity?"

But if Thy minister, O my God, seeks naught but Thee on earth, wilt Thou not return to him glory for glory, the glory of the elect for the glory of the world which, for the love of Thee, he has despised? St. Gregory has given us a description of the apostles, coming before Jesus Christ on the last day, and offering to Him the fruit of their talents. The description is admirable: "*Unusquisque quid sit operatus ostendetur. Ibi Petrus cum Judœa conversa, quam post se traxit, apparebit; ibi Paulus conversum, ut ita dixerim, mundum ducens; ibi Andreas post se Achaiam, ibi Joannes Asiam, Thomas Indiam in conspectu sui judicis ducet.*"—(Hom. 17, in Evang.) But next to those heroes of the Gospel, who have conquered nations and peoples, there will appear in glory all the good priests who shall have gained to God as many souls as they could: "*Ibe omnes dominici gregis arietes, cum animarium lucris apparebunt.*"—(Ibid.) The one will say: "*Lord, Thou didst deliver to me five talents, behold I have gained other five, over and above.*" The other will thus speak: "*Lord, Thou didst deliver to me two talents, behold I have gained other two.*" To all He shall answer: "*Well done, good and faithful servant.*" I shall proportion my reward to the ardor of thy desires, to the purity of the motives which animated and guided thy zeal; my joy could not enter within thy heart. "*Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*" O my soul, is there any labor that should frighten thee, when there is question of gaining this crown, and of escaping the dread punishment destined to the servant who has hid his talent?

2d Point. *Sad state of the priest who uses not the talent he has received.* The servant who had received but one talent, drawing near his master, said to him: "*I know that thou art a hard man.*" Passion blinds men; they throw the blame on the law, when they have not courage to observe it. "*Being afraid, I went and hid thy talent in the earth.*" This is culpable negligence, baneful illusion; they are afraid to drown themselves with those who suffer shipwreck, and they forget that, being obliged to preserve them from this misfortune by all possible means, they

lose themselves by the mere fact that they strive not to save them Hence we see how the master qualifies the servant who had neither squandered the talent nor gained anything else. "*Wicked and slothful servant!*" To omit to do the good we are bound to do, is evil; and refusing to be useful when we can, is, according to St. Augustine, wickedness and cruelty: "*Nulli prodesse impium et crudele est.*"—(Enarr. in ps. xcv.) Let us judge of the nature of the crime by the greatness of the punishment: "*Take away the talent from him;*" subtraction of graces and of heavenly gifts: "*Cast him in the outer darkness:*" eternal reprobation from the face of God and the glory of the elect: "*There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth;*" eternal torment, consummate despair.

The inaction of the clergy allows all liberty to all the passions; need we be surprised that it provokes outbursts of the justice of God? Priests, who, after a few years of labor in the ministry, hasten to retire from it, in order to lead an easy and almost useless life, as if God and the Church had no more claims upon them, ought to read and meditate the following oracles: *Neglect not the grace which is in thee, which was given to thee;* and take the resolution which St. Basil suggests to us: "*Unusquisque, quocumque tandem dono eum Deus dignatus sit, id multiplicet, hoc ipso ad beneficentiam et utilitatem plurium adhibito.*"—(Regul. Brev. 253.)

1st Point. *What is the talent confided to me on this day of my ordination?* Rewards are decreed to the good use of gifts received, not to their number and excellence. God proportions the means to the end; the end of the priest is the same as that of Jesus Christ, to continue the work of redemption! . . See also the powers conferred on you! *Potestas sacerdotis est sicut potestas divinarum personarum.* From His cross on Calvary Christ looked up to heaven in order to glorify His Father in heaven; He turned His eyes to the earth, desiring to sanctify mankind which inhabits it; He looked into limbo to free the just souls which it contained. So it is with the priest. Heaven, earth, purgatory, wait in expectation to see the use he will make of his talents.

2d Point. *Blessedness of the priest who traffics faithfully with his*

talent. His fidelity itself renders him happy. Great is the comfort he experiences at the thought: "My life is spent in the service of God and of my neighbor. I glorify the Lord, and prepare souls to glorify Him eternally". . . . But if Thy minister seeks naught but Thee, on earth, O my God, wilt Thou not return him glory for glory, the glory of the elect for the glory of the world which he despised? What labor can cause him any dread when he thinks on the crown prepared for him?

3d Point. *Sad state of the priest who neglects to traffic with his talent.* To omit the good which one is bound to do is evil; refusing to be useful when it is possible, is, according to St. Augustine, wickedness and cruelty. *Take away the talent from him; cast him into exterior darkness: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.* . . The inaction of the clergy prepares the triumph of hell. *Neglect not the grace which is in thee.*

CXII. MEDITATION.

22d SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—RENDER TO CÆSAR THE THINGS THAT ARE CÆSAR'S.—(Math. xxii: 21.)

DUTIES OF THE CLERGY TOWARDS THOSE IN TEMPORAL POWER.

1st.—THEY SHOULD TEACH THEIR PEOPLE WHAT THEIR OBLIGATIONS ARE TOWARDS THOSE WHO GOVERN THEM.

2d.—THEY SHOULD GIVE THEM EXAMPLE OF FIDELITY TO THE LAW OF GOD REGARDING THIS MATTER.

1st Point. *The clergy should teach the faithful what their duties are toward those who govern them.* This point of the moral doctrine of the Gospel is delicate; but its importance is such that it should excite and sustain our zeal. When the Pharisees caused it to be asked of the Savior if it were lawful to pay the tribute to Cæsar, they thought they had laid for Him a snare into which He must fall. "If he answer in

the affirmative, He shall lose the esteem of His countrymen who consider the authority of the Romans as one they had usurped, He will pass for a traitor to His nation. If He should deny the obligation to pay the tribute, He declares Himself the enemy of the Romans; His action, whatever it may be, must render Him hateful either to the people or to the sovereign power." What will our Lord do? Will He refuse an explanation, in order not to wound the feelings of any one? No! He shall speak, and though He knows that many will abuse His words, He pronounces this oracle which nations and peoples never forget but for their own misfortune: Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. Let us imitate our model; let us be prudent, but let us speak; truth should be declared to all by us. Let us teach the faithful that they have a two-fold obligation toward their superiors in the temporal order. They should respect their dignity and submit to their authority.

I. Religion teaches that we are bound to give tokens of respect to our temporal rulers; but by so doing it elevates us, for it teaches us also to offer them to God alone, whom we venerate in the depositories of His power.

"*By me do Kings reign*," says the eternal wisdom. Not only do the rights of sovereign power come from God, not only are these established by His law, but the choice of the persons who are clothed with those powers, is the work of Providence; whether they owe their elevation to birth, for God is the Master of nature; whether they obtain them by election, for God presides over all councils. The majesty of the King is a reflection of the majesty of God. *Fear God, honor the King.*—(I. P. ii: 17.) The second of these obligations is a consequence of the first. Fear God. St. Paul, after often repeating that princes are the ministers of God, adds the following: "*Render . . . honor to whom honor is due.*"—(Rom. xiii: 7.)

Bossuet applies to kings the words of the prophet: "You are God's, and you are all the children of the most High." And next he exclaims: "But, O you, Gods of flesh and blood, Gods of earth and dust, shall die like men. You are Gods, however, though liable to die, for your dignity does not die; this spirit of royalty passes entire unto your successors, and impresses everywhere the same respect, the same veneration." St. Gregory Nazianze preaching in presence of emperors, in-

vites them to consider their own persons, in order to behold in their own greatness the brightness of Divine majesty. "O Monarchs," says he to them, "know the mystery of God in your persons. High things are His only; inferior ones He shares with you. Be you, therefore, subjects of God, as you are His images?"

The same teaching is found in all the books of the Old Testament wherein we find it recommended to respect temporal superiors in our very thoughts. "*Detract not the King, no, not in thy thought.*"—(Eccle. x : 20.) And wherein also are related and praised beautiful examples of this respect. What more admirable than David's respect for Saul, and that even after God had chosen him to reign in his stead, and at the time also that this prince persecuted him with greater fury?

II. Submission is due the authority of Cæsar on the same ground that respect is due to his dignity. The temporal monarch is simply the delegate of the eternal monarch. We cannot but wondor how persistently Jesus Christ and His apostles inculcated this doctrine, when we remember in whose hands civil powers were placed in those days.

The Savior was about to die. What does He say to the Roman prætor who made such an ill use of his authority? "*Thou shouldst not have any power against Me, unless it were given thee from above.*"—(J. xix : 11.) Nothing could be more precise. God who reigns in heaven, was He, who had given Pilate the power which he exercised over Jesus Christ. For we read also, "*There is no power but from God, and those that are, are ordained by God.*"—(Rom. xiii : 11.) The powers which we find established, *quæ sunt*, are they to which we cannot refuse obedience without refusing it to God Himself. "*Let, therefore, every soul be subject to higher powers . . . not only for wrath, but for conscience sake.*"—(Ibid.) St. Peter forbids discriminating among the different depositories of power. All hold their power from God; we should, therefore, obey them all. *Be ye, therefore, subject to every human creature for God's sake; whether to the King as excelling, or to governors as sent by Him.*—(I. Pet. 11 : 13.)

Here is a sublime idea which God gives us of sovereigns. He shows them to us clothed with a power they have received from Him; He places their thrones in the safest of places, viz: in the conscience of men, wherein Himself hath His throne. He admits of no pretext for revolt, not even idolatry or apostacy. Faith acknowledges in them no

fault depriving them of their right to command, except if they should command the doing of something which God forbids, or forbid a thing to be done which He commands; for it is just to obey God rather than men. We do not say to rebel against men in order to obey God: for even in this case the resistance which is commanded consists, not in opposing force to force, but in suffering and dying.

Whilst religion renders the authority of the princes inviolable, by consecrating their rights, it, on the other hand, imposes on them great obligations. It gives them to us for masters; it gives them also a master whom they must dread. If they cause others to tremble, religion makes them tremble in their turn at the expectation of a judgment which shall be by so much more severe, and of torments by so much more dreadful that they shall have been more elevated above other men in power and honor. "*A more severe judgment shall be for them that bear rule . . . . the mighty shall be mightily tormented.*"—(Wisd. vi: 6, 7.) The priests who are the apostles of truth cannot leave their people in ignorance of those great obligations; they should fulfill them themselves with greater perfections than their hearers.

2d Point. *Obligations of the clergy toward those in temporal power.* We are the physicians of souls, and we know which is the predominant evil of our days. If the faithful do not see in us models of respect and obedience toward temporal superiors, shall we be able to combat with efficacy that fever of independence which manifests itself every day by signs so alarming, and which endangers society itself?

In order to submit to the capricious edict of a pagan emperor, the Savior humbled Himself so far as to be born in a stable. He consented to die on the cross without contradicting the iniquitous decree which condemned Him to this punishment. Whilst forming the first evangelical laborers to their apostolate, He had performed a miracle in order to teach His ministers how carefully they should avoid anything which might give disedification in this matter. After demonstrating that there was no obligation for Him to pay the tribute, He had immediately told St. Peter, whom He destined to be the head of the sacerdotal tribe: "*But, that we may not scandalize them, go to the sea and cast in a hook, and take the fish which shall first come up; and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou shalt find a shekel: take that and give it to them, for Me and for thee.*"—(Mat. xvii: 26.)

Priests of Jesus Christ, take always for your rule the sentiments and conduct of your adorable Master; let your words, your actions, everything in you strengthen the great principle of subordination, so powerfully shaken in our days. Rash censures of authority have been more than once the prelude of criminal declamations under which it had to succumb; far from participating in these, let us prevent them as much as we can. Let us suffer something, nay, let us suffer everything, rather than supply persons of ill-will with weapons against us; and let us consider those trials as a precious grace. "*This is praiseworthy, if for conscience toward God, a man endure afflictions, sufferings, wrongfully.*"—(I. P. ii: 19.)

Finally, let us pray, as St. Paul exhorts us to do, for those who are the mandatories of God in the government of the people, and who exert such an influence, not merely over their temporal, but also on their eternal destinies. There is nothing more pleasing to our Lord Jesus Christ. "I desire, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgiving be made for all men; for kings and all those who are in high station, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all piety and charity, for this is good and acceptable before God, our Savior."—(I. Tim. ii: 1.)

1st Point. *The Clergy should teach the faithful concerning their obligation toward those who govern them.* Let us, after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, be prudent in instructing in so delicate a matter; but let us not fail to instruct. We have two duties to fulfill toward our superiors in the temporal order: we should respect their dignity; we should submit to their authority.

I. God it is whom we honor in the depositories of His power. "*By Me do Kings reign.*" The second of these obligations is a consequence of the first. This doctrine is found in the books of the Old Testament as well as those of the New.

II. Submission is due to authority on the same ground as respect is due to dignity. The temporal ruler is only the delegate of the eternal King. "*Thou shouldst not have any power against Me unless it were given thee from above.*" The powers which we find established, *quæ sunt*, are they to which we cannot refuse obedience without refusing it to God. It is

true, however, that religion imposes great duties upon princes. "*A more severe judgment shall be for those who bear rule.*"

2d Point. *The clergy should give the example in this matter* We are physicians of souls; we should combat the predominant passion of our age, which is a spirit of independence. Here, also, our Lord showed Himself our model; in His nativity, during His life and in His sufferings and death. Let us suffer everything rather than supply ill-disposed persons with weapons against us.

CXIII. MEDITATION.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS—DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF SOULS, THE GREAT OBJECT OF PASTORAL SOLICITUDE.

1st.—THE SOUL DIES BY SIN, WHICH SEPARATES IT FROM GOD.

2d.—THE SOUL IS RESTORED TO LIFE BY THE GRACE OF JUSTIFICATION, WHICH RECONCILES IT TO GOD.

1st Point. *Death of the soul by sin.* The soul, according to its natural life, can not die. Not so as to its supernatural and Divine life, which, alas, it too often loses! "*Ita immortalis est ut mori possit, ita mortalis ut mori non possit.*"—(St Greg. 4 Mor. c: 7.) What a sad genesis is that of sin. It begets death! "*Peccatum cum consummatum fuerit, generat mortem.*"—(St. Jas. i: 15.) God is the life of the soul, as the soul is the life of the body: "*Sicut anima est vita corporis, sic animæ vita est Deus.*"—(St. Aug. de. Verb. Dom.) You think that man lives because he walks, sees, speaks? You are deceived. That which lives in him is but the least of himself—his body. The house still stands, but it is inhabited only by a dead man. Yet we weep over a body from which the soul has departed, and have no tears of compassion for the soul separated from God by sin.—(St. Aug.)

Between a corpse and a soul in mortal sin, there are striking analogies. The most beautiful face becomes repulsive under the withering hand of death. So does sin stand upon the soul a hideous deformity. The richest man has nothing the moment that he dies; and the soul richest in merit before God, loses all the moment it incurs His displeasure by sin. After death, it is no longer possible to amass riches, neither can the soul in the death of sin acquire anything meritorious for eternal life. In that corpse there is a heart, but it beats no longer; there are eyes, but they see no longer; ears but they hear no more. Is it not the image of the sinner stricken with spiritual blindness and obduracy of heart? God moves heaven and earth to arouse him, but he remains insensible to all. And just as a corpse in decay exhales contagious and noxious odors, so does the soul in the corruption of sin spread around it the deadly odor and contagion of scandal. Finally, as the body, separated from the soul, will soon be cast into the grave, there to become food for worms, so the soul dead in sin, if it return not to life by returning to God, shall be buried in hell, there to be devoured by the worm of a remorse which dieth not.

Priest of God, is not that the state of some, perhaps of a great number, of your spiritual children? How awful the thought! When the Lord, in order by a final plague-stroke to soften the hardened heart of Pharaoh, slew in one night the first-born in all the land of Egypt, a great wail of grief was heard throughout the kingdom: *Ortus est clamor magnus in Ægypto.* The sacred writer gives as reason for this great lamentation, that there was not a family throughout the land but had a dead member to bewail.—(Ex. xi.) Pastor of souls, does God see in your parish many houses in which there is no dead? Does He not see in it some families in which there is none but dead? Yet where are the sighs? where are the afflicted hearts? where are the tears? Nobody gives it a thought. Reflect on it, O you, at least, who are the spiritual fathers of so many unhappy souls? Say with Jeremias: "*Who will give water to my head and a fountain of tears to my eyes, and I will weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people?*"—(ix: 1.) But whilst bewailing their death, neglect no means of recalling them to life.

2d Point. *Resurrection of the soul through the grace of justification.* The Gospel mentions only three visible resurrections wrought by

Jesus Christ; but those which He invisibly wrought are counted by thousands, says St. Augustine. And oh, how much more gratifying to His Divine heart are these! All that spiritual death had stripped the soul of, beauty, merits, dignity, acquired rights, all are restored to it by sanctifying grace, when it has the happiness to recover God's friendship. It is a deposed and captive king re-ascending his throne. If the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus, of the widow's son of Naïm, and of Lazarus, was an occasion of great joy to their families, we ought to know that far greater is the joy in heaven over the conversion of one sinner. But how will the priest merit to become the instrument of that conversion? By following the example of the prince of the synagogue, whose grief and joy are related in the Gospel of this day. He sees his daughter at the point of death. He has immediate recourse to the Author of Life. He draws nigh unto Jesus, adores Him, fearlessly entreats Him. His grief is his sufficient excuse. "*O Lord*," *he says*. "*my daughter is even now dead, but come, lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live!*" According to St. Mark, the ruler *besought Him much*. —(Mark v.) When doing God's work, let us always put our chief reliance upon God, and let our confidence be as unlimited as His power and goodness. Let us draw near unto Jesus and say to Him: Those children whom Thou hast confided to me are dead. Sin has separated them from Thee, the only principle of true life. But come to them in the person of Thy minister, speak to them through his lips, "breathe upon them the breath of life, and they shall rise again."—(Ezec. xxxvii: 9.)

How kindly the Son of God hears the prayer of Jairus. "*And Jesus, rising, followed him.*" On the way He strengthens the man's faith by healing the woman troubled with the issue of blood who had merely touched the hem of His garment. He enters the house, and although those gathered therein showed Him great disrespect.—"*They laughed Him to scorn.*"—He, nevertheless, performs the miracle. Now, if Jesus, moved by the tears of a father, restores life to a corpse which must again succumb to death, how much more ardently does He not desire to resurrect souls which shall live forever? Go, therefore, with confidence to the altar, reanimate your faith, re-enkindle your zeal, and when you shall see with your own eyes, and hold in your own hands, and possess within your breast the victim immolated for the redemption

of sinners, pray fervently for all those spiritually dead, for whose resurrection the Church makes increasing supplication, but in an especial manner remember those whose salvation has been confided to your care. Remember that God shows mercy in proportion to our fervor, and the firmness of our confidence when we ask for mercy: "*Fiat misericordia tua Domine, suder nos quemadmodum speravimus in te.*" "*Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have hoped in Thee.*"—(Ps. xxxii: 22.)

1st Point. *Death of the soul by sin.* God is the life of the soul, as the soul is the life of the body. Striking analogies between a corpse and a soul in mortal sin. They have lost everything. . . . beauty, possession, the power of acquiring, sensibility. . . . Both are destined to the gravel, to be food for the worm that gnaws. . . . . Alas, this may be the state of many of whom the care has been confided to me. . . If no one be concerned on their account, shall not I, who am their father, grieve at the sight of their miserable state?

2d Point. *Resurrection of the soul by the grace of justification.* All that sin had taken away from that soul, beauty, merits, rights, is returned to her with sanctifying grace. Joy in heaven at the conversion of a sinner, what should the priest do to become an instrument of conversion? Let him imitate Jairus. Let him ardently pray to our Savior. . . If, out of regard for the tears of a father, Jesus brought back to life a corpse which was to die anew, will He not be much more willing to give life to souls which shall live eternally?

CXIV. MEDITATION.

25th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—DEDICATION OF CHURCHES; RESPECT DUE TO THEM.

The Patriarch Jacob, after a mysterious dream in which the presence of the Lord was made manifest to him, being seized with a holy fear, cried out: "*How terrible is this place! This is the house of God*

and the gate of heaven!" These two designations, which apply so well to our churches, remind us of two obligations, which concern priests and people alike, namely, to respect and to love the house of God.

1st.—RESPECT THE CHURCH; IT IS THE HOUSE OF GOD.

2d.—LOVE THE CHURCH; IT IS THE GATE OF HEAVEN.

1st Point. *Our churches are the house of God*, therefore should we always hold them in reverence. When Solomon, surrounded by all the people of Israel, dedicated to the Almighty the magnificent temple which he had built, the splendor of the ceremonies, and the Divine majesty which filled the house and was sensibly felt, filled the assembly with such a profound feeling of religious awe, that they prostrated themselves to the ground and cried out with their king: "*Is it credible then that God should dwell with men on the earth?*"—(II. Par. vi: 18.) We too should experience like feelings of awe every time we enter a church, if we were thoroughly impressed with the sense of these words: "*This is the house of God!*" Yes; really God's house! It has been consecrated to Him. He has accepted it as his abiding-place upon earth. Herein He manifests His Divine presence. To the eye of faith, how marvellous is the beauty of even the humblest country church!

Religion alone inspired the thought of rearing that edifice. Religion gathered the materials, laid the foundations, raised the walls. It was completed, it was decorated, but it was not yet the house of God. It became His temple on the day when the Church, by her solemn prayers and consecrations, separated it from profane edifices and consecrated it to Divine worship. Then was offered there the sacrifice of the Lamb without spot, and then the Savior came to take possession of it, not to abide there transitorily only, but to make it His permanent home. From that day we can rightly say of it: "*Ecce tabernaculum Dei cum hominibus, et habitabit in eis:*" and the promise of Jesus Christ, "*ecce ego vobiscum sum usque ad consummationem sæculi,*" is, by the continual presence of the blessed Eucharist, again realized.

As a monarch, though sovereign in all his realms, yet has palaces in certain localities, where he receives the homage of his subjects, gives audiences, and more immediately exercises his sovereign authority:

so also God, who is everywhere present by His essence, His power, and His providence, willed to have temples wherein to dwell among men, to receive the public worship due to Him, and to accomplish the great designs of His mercy. Is it not especially in our churches that our Divine Savior continues His work of redemption? Does He cease to make His presence felt there by enlightening the blind, by healing the sick, by restoring the dead to life? To each of our temples, but in a much higher sense than to the temple of Solomon, applies this oracle of the Lord: "*I have chosen this place to Myself for a house of sacrifice. . . . My eyes also shall be open, and My ears attentive to the prayer of him that shall pray in this place . . . and My eyes and My heart may remain there perpetually.*"—(II Par. vii: 15, 16, 17.) What follows, therefore, but that no place in the whole universe deserves so much veneration as this chosen temple of God? The Catholic sanctuary is unquestionably much more worthy of reverence than the ancient tabernacle. Can the manna be compared to the most august of our sacraments? "*I will come into Thy house; I will worship toward Thy holy temple in Thy fear.*"—(Ps. v: 8.)

O my God, has that always been my conduct? If innocent of exterior irreverences to Thy supreme majesty in Thy house, how has it been in regard to the interior recollection of my soul? My body and my lips have paid Thee exterior homage; but my heart, alas! has often been far from Thee. Henceforth, may Thy adorable presence so occupy my whole mind, that in Thy holy temple I may think of naught but Thee! When I shall enter there, I will say with St. Bernard: "Thoughts of earth, stay outside. This is no time or place for you." "The temple of God," says St. Nicholas, "is a most heavenly place; when we are there we should not allow ourselves a thought or an action that savors of earth."

2d Point. *Our churches are the gate of heaven; therefore we should love them.* It is by grace that we gain heaven, and all sources of grace are opened for us in the sacred temples of the Church. At her baptismal fonts we were first invested with that robe of innocence which made us children of God, brothers and co-heirs of Jesus Christ. In her tribunals of mercy, our sins are remitted, and all our rights to our heavenly inheritance are restored to us. In her tabernacles dwells the sanctifier of our souls, ever ready to lavish His blessings on us. At her

holy tables, we receive the bread of angels, the principle and pledge of our glorious immortality. Her altars are a new Calvary on which the great victim daily renews the mystery of our redemption. From her pulpit God teaches and exhorts us; for to hear His minister, is to hear Himself.

The church, therefore, is for every Christian the ante-chamber of heaven. If enemies persecute Him, there he finds refuge. In this arsenal he finds whatever weapons he needs for his defence. Let the favor he desires be what it may, the house of God is always the house of prayer, and of prayer more readily heard. Great, then, must be the attraction which the Church has for the man of faith! A thrill of joy pervades his heart when he hears the invitation: "Let us go to the house of the Lord."

Lord of hosts, who would not love Thy tabernacles? "My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord." "The sparrow hath found itself a house, and the turtle a nest for herself. . . . Thy altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. . . . this is the house of God and the gate of heaven!" In order never again to fail in reverence for this house of God, nor in my ardent desire to visit it, it will be enough to say to myself: "This is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven."

1st Point. *Our churches are the house of God. We should respect them,* because they are consecrated to Him, because He dwells in them, and ceases not to manifest His presence in them—They were built for God, they have been separated from profane edifices and dedicated to the worship of God. After different ceremonies and prayers which imparted to them a religious character, the holy sacrifice was offered in them, Jesus took possession of them. From that time, of the church so consecrated, it could be said: "Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and He will dwell with them." The real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is a literal accomplishment of the promise: "Behold I am with you all the days" . . . . Jesus Christ is with us, in our sanctuaries and He is not there inactive; here He continues His work of redemption, enlightening, healing souls, applying to them the merits of His blood. Of each one of our churches He says: I have

chosen and sanctified this place, that my name may be there. . . . My eyes shall be open and my ears attentive. . . . My heart shall be there. Let us draw the inference that no place in the world is worthy of so much veneration. . . . Henceforth, when entering a church, I shall say with St. Bernard: "Stay out, thoughts of earth; this is neither your time nor your place."

2d Point. *Our churches are the gate of heaven. . . let us love them.* We enter heaven through grace; now all the sources of grace are opened to us in our churches through the sacrifice, the sacraments and preaching of God's word. The holy place is in reality the entrance hall of heaven . . . our refuge . . . our arsenal . . . in no other place is our prayer so readily heard. "I have rejoiced in the things that were said to me, we shall go into the house of the Lord." "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!"

CXV. MEDITATION.

SAME SUBJECT—ZEAL FOR THE HOUSE OF GOD IN THE HEART OF THE GOOD PRIEST, IS A FIRE WHICH CONSUMES IT—"*The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up.*"—(John ii : 17.)

1st.—MOTIVES OF THIS ZEAL.

2d.—ITS QUALITIES.

1st Point. *Motives which enkindle our zeal to honor our churches.* If we go back in spirit to the day of that solemn and awful promulgation from the Mount of Sinai, we shall hear amongst the other commandments this one: "*Reverence my sanctuary, I am the Lord.*" What majesty in these words! We know what details the Almighty God Himself deigned to give, what precautions He saw fit to take, in order to secure for that tabernacle of old the reverence due to it, and to protect it from the slightest profanation, and with what severity He punished the least transgressions of His law in that respect.

The tabernacle, it is true, was holy; but was it as holy as our churches? We know also what indignation our Lord displayed against the profaners of the temple of Jerusalem. He was meekness itself; and yet He takes up a scourge, casts out of the temple those who sold therein the victims destined for the sacrifices, overturns the tables of the money-changers saying: "*My house is the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves.*"—(Luke. xix : 46.) Of Him the prophet had foretold that the smoking flax He should not quench, and yet on two distinct occasions did He display a holy indignation against the profaners of His house, one at the beginning and the other at the end of His public life. The Church has the history of this extraordinary episode read to us three times in the year in the Gospels of the Mass. Does she not thereby intend to give the priests a lesson of zeal for the honor of the house of God?

Many other evidences, too, does the Church give of her desire to see the temples of God honored and respected. She instituted the order of porter to keep everything in the Church clean, orderly and decent. If in her councils she has sometimes praised those who, like Nepotian, distinguished themselves by their zeal for the honor of God's house: *Erat sollicitus si niteret altare, si parietes absque fuligine, si pavimenta tersa, si sacrarium mundum, si vasa luculenta* . . . she has also, on the other hand, severely reprimanded indevout priests who could find neither time nor means to keep their churches in becoming order, whilst luxury abounded in their homes.

In order to stimulate ourselves to greater zeal in this respect, it will surely suffice to call to mind the two principal obligations of our sacerdotal state, namely, to glorify God and to save souls.

The Lord has made us stewards of His household and charged us with whatever tends to His glory, and we are, therefore, bound to leave nothing undone to have Him reverenced in His own sanctuary, and to suffer no profanation of the sacred place. "Priests," says the pious bishop of Agen, "being officers of the crown, are under special obligations not only to honor the Divine King, but also to procure for Him from others due respect and reverence." Again, if we have really at heart the salvation of others, we will do all in our power to draw them to the Church, to make them love the Church, wherein alone they can draw from all the fountains of grace. They will undoubtedly be at-

tracted to the Church, and they will love it, if they are pleased and satisfied there, and this they can hardly fail to be, if the church is properly kept, becomingly decorated, and as much as circumstances will permit, made a fit abiding-place for the majesty of God, which dwells therein. It is, then, not unfrequently that the beginning and the end of the reformation of a parish is accomplished. But if the pastor is not animated by this holy zeal, the contrary will inevitably result.

2d Point. *Qualities of sacerdotal zeal for reverence toward our churches.* That, like all zeal, ought to be active and prudent, courageous and constant.

Fire always gives heat; wherever there is fire, its presence can be felt. "He maketh His ministers flames of fire."—(Heb. i: 7.) But it is not alone in the neatness and decorum of his church that the zealous priest shows his love for the beauty of God's house. "*Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house.*" But he leaves nothing undone to have Him honored whom the angels praise, the dominations adore, and in whose presence all the powers of heaven tremble. He never rests, he is never satisfied until all abuses and irreverences are banished from that sacred place. The more crying the scandal, the more is his zeal enkindled. The very obstacles which it encounters, serve but to inflame it the more. If he succeed not to the full measure of his desires, his troubled soul bewails it before God. Like the prophet, he is dry with weeping: "*Tabescere me fecit zelus meus;*" or with St. Augustine he says: "*Quæ forte ibi perverse viderit, satagit emendare, cupit corrigere, non quiescit. Si emendare non potest, tolerat, gemit.*"—(St. Aug.) St. John Chrysostom, enveighing energetically against irreverences committed in the house of God, declared that he was afraid a thunderbolt from heaven would crush him, if he did not prevent them by all the means in his power.

But let us not forget that here, as in other things, we preach most effectually by our own good example. The people believe their eyes rather than their ears. Example throws a flood of light on things which words may serve only to obscure. We should never appear in the sanctuary without being penetrated with a religious awe. St. Thomas, in order to excite in himself this veneration, was wont to say to our Lord, when in the presence of the Holy Eucharist: "*Judex*

crederis esse venturus." Who does not know that the sight of a good priest prostrate before the tabernacle, and entirely absorbed in profound recollection, has been the means which Providence not unfrequently employed to convince unbelievers and to convert great sinners? O what a beautiful thing it is to need only to be seen in order to be useful! "*Quam pulchrum est ut videaris et prosis!*"—(St. Amb.)

O Lord, I desire to seriously consider and with the help of Thy grace, faithfully practice, what Thou hast deigned to say to me by the lips of a priest—one according to Thine own heart:

"*Pave ad sanctuarium meum, fili; videat te populus meus paventem, et paveat ipse. . . . Locus iste terribilis est; time ergo quando ingrederis, et tremore concutiantur ossa tua. . . . Dum celebras, dum divina officia peragis, dum sacramenta ministras videat et miretur populus reverentiam et decentiam tuam in cultu meo: et sic ad pietatem excitetur. Nil in situ, in motu, in incessu, in voce appareat nisi modestia, gravitate, humilitate, dignitate, et religione plenum. . . . O si populus videret faciem tuam tauquam faciem Angeli, sicut olim in Stephano visa est! qualiter mysteria mea veneraretur et coleret.*" —(Mem. vit. Sac.)

1st Point. *Motives of sacerdotal zeal for the honor of churches.* "*Reverence my sanctuary. I am the Lord.*" What majesty in those words of the Lord, promulgating His law on Mount Sinai! We know all what He had prescribed, in order to secure for the tabernacle the respect which was due to it. This building was really holy, not, however, so holy as our churches!—Our Lord, who was meekness itself, cast out of the temple those who profaned it. The Church, which is ever guided by the Holy Ghost, has not neglected anything which might cause the house of God to be respected. For this end she instituted the order of *porter.* She has in her councils praised the zeal of fervent priests and blamed severely those who were negligent in the care of their churches.—The end of the priesthood is to glorify God and to save men. The Lord has made me the intendant of His house, and confided to me the interests of His glory. I should, therefore, cause Him to be respected in His dwelling; I should honor Him myself, and have others render to Him the homages due to Him. Being the Savior

of my brethren, I must attract them to the Church where all the fountains of grace are open for them. This they shall readily do, if they know that they will find in it proper order and decency.

2d Point. *Qualities of zeal for the honor of churches.* Fire is never without heat. A priest zealous for the honor of his church takes no rest until he has banished from it, scandal and immodesties. As long as he does not succeed, he gives way to grief and he prays. St. Chrysostom feared lest lightning would crush him, if he did not do everything in his power to prevent the recurrence of sacrilegious profanations. In this matter let us preach principally by example. Let us never appear in the sanctuary, except under the influence of a religious awe. We are under the eyes of Him *whom angels praise, dominations adore, whose presence causes the power to tremble.* Let us always be profoundly recollected in our churches. Those feelings will pass from us to the faithful.

PROPER OF SAINTS.

CXVI. MEDITATION.

JUNE 16th—ST. JOHN FRANCIS REGIS.

In the life of this man of God, just as in the life of St. Francis Xavier, whom he had chosen for his model, all breathes of the most ardent charity and the greatest zeal for the salvation of souls. He displayed as much devotedness laboring in our midst, as did the great Xavier in the Indies for the conversion of so many different nations. The mission of both lasted but ten years, yet in that brief time what a grand career they ran! The Church has sketched for us in the prayer proper to his feast, the protrait of St. Francis Regis. Clement XI., who declared him *blessed*, and who invoked his name with particular confidence, composed that prayer himself: "*O God, who didst adorn Thy confessor, blessed John Francis, with wonderful charity and an invincible patience, to endure great hardships for the salvation of souls, mercifully grant that instructed by his example, and aided by his intercession, we may obtain the reward of everlasting life.*" Let us consider these two points:—

1st.—THE ARDOR OF HIS CHARITY.

2d.—HIS PATIENCE.

1st Point. *Ardent charity of St. Francis Regis.* Every man has his passion. Regis seems to have had no other than to love God and to cause Him to be loved. Sparks of that Divine fire began to manifest themselves from his childhood. When he was yet but a student, he set himself to improving the morals of his fellow-students. His first efforts were so successful that he won many of them to Jesus Christ. When he had become professor, he often excited in the minds of his pupils a desire to meditate on things eternal, and he availed himself of every opportunity to inspire them with horror for sin. One day, when one of them had committed some grievous fault, he spoke to them of the judgment of God with so much force that they were seized with terror; and some of them afterward state how the same feeling of awe and fear came over them every time they thought of what he had said on that occasion. That was, as it were, the prelude to his apostolic life, which began with his missions.

As soon as this field was open to his zeal, he might be likened to another Elias: "*Elias, the prophet, stood up as a fire, and his word burnt like a torch.*"—(Eccle. xlviii: 1.) Henceforth he had but one desire, one occupation—to glorify God by the sanctification of souls. To that he devoted every moment of his time, alike in city and in country, in churches and public places, in prisons, hospitals and private houses. When preaching, he first of all laid down some Christian truth in all its lucidity and force, then he drew therefrom its moral consequences, and finally, by his pathetic appeals, he carried his audience with him. His discourses were delivered with such vehemence, that his voice often failed him. Often also his face was all aglow; he was himself so much moved by what he said, and he spoke with so much unction and fervor, that generally both the preacher and his hearers were melted to tears.

Unmindful of all else, he was zealous only in pleading the cause of God and that of souls. Once, having used all his endeavors to convert a sinner, and finding all his efforts unavailing, with tears he besought the sinner, saying: "I conjure you, plunge your sword into my heart

if you will, but cease offending your Creator." He declared to one of his friends that life to him would be unbearable, if it did not afford him the opportunity to labor for the welfare of souls and extend the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Never did his charity experience those alterations of fervor and tepidity which even the best priests sometimes have to lament. The fire which consumed him, daily increased in intensity, till his last breath. In his forty-fourth year he falls seriously ill, and he begins to realize that his end is near. But he had announced a mission at La Lamesque. A great multitude flocks thither from all parts to hear the word of God. Regis hastens whither duty calls him and where death awaits him. He arrives completely exhausted, and, without rest, begins the fatiguing work of the mission. His illness increases, but Regis redoubles his labors. At last nature succumbs. He is carried, against his will, to a poor cottage, there on his pallet he continues to hear the confessions not yet completed, admits new penitents, and dies in the actual exercise of his ministry. What wonder, then, that when about to give up his soul into the hands of his Creator, turning toward his attendant, he exclaimed: O dear brother, how happy and contented I die!

Is it with such serene contentment and joy that so many clergymen whose lives are indeed blameless before men, but without fruit before God, shall look upon the face of approaching death? They do not give scandal; but do they do all the good they ought? The harvest needs laborers, indefatigable workers. Is there enough of them? Let us consider the lament of St. Gregory, and fear lest it apply to us: "*Ad messem multam operarii pauci sunt, quod sine gravi mœrore loqui non possumus. . . Ecce mundus sacerdotibus plenus est, sed tamen in messe Dei rarus valde reperitur operator: quia officium quidem sacerdotale suscepimus, sed opus officii non implemus. . . . Relinquunt Deum hi qui nobis commissi sunt, et tacemus; in pravis actibus jacent, et correptionis manum non tendimus; quotidie per multas nequitias pereunt, et eos ad infernum tendere negligenter videmus.*"—(In Ev., i, I hom. xvii.)

2d Point. *Invincible patience of St. Francis Regis.* St. Paul tells us that patience is the first fruit of charity: "*Charitas patiens est.*"—(I Cor. xiii: 4;) and St. James says that it is the perfection of all vir-

tues: "*Patientia opus perfectum habet.*"—(Jac. i: 4.) Certain it is that patience is the source of our merits, and that charity itself derives all its value, not from the words which seem to express it, but by the works which prove it, by the more or less painful sacrifices which they entail: "*Non diligamus verbo neque lingua sed opere et veritate.*" "*Let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*"—(I John iii: 18.) There is no virtue more necessary for a pastor than this, because of his many cares, his incessant labors, and the difficulties which he has almost always to encounter in the accomplishment of his designs. The good priest fights against all bad passions, and all bad passions fight against him. Co-operating with Jesus Christ in the great work of redemption, the good priest ought to be, like his Master, a man of sorrows, and like Him, too, a man of patience. Such was Francis, the apostle of Vivarais and Velay.

He had requested to be sent on the mission to Canada, with the hope of there shedding his blood for Jesus Christ. His request was not granted, but it may be truly said that his ministry in Languedoc was a continual martyrdom. He might be seen in the depth of the most rigorous winters, in the most wild regions, climbing precipitous mountains, crossing impetuous torrents, crawling on hands and knees on the edge of frightful precipices. Sometimes whilst traversing forests, he would stop to preach to the multitude that gathered there eager to hear him, would climb a rock or a mound of frozen snow, and thence distribute to the people the bread of the word of God. He rested from preaching only to take up the work of confessions, in which he labored oftentimes far into the night.

But more admirable still was his patience under the outrages and ill-treatments he endured without the least feeling of resentment in his heart, or the slightest shadow of displeasure on his face. One day, some one expressed sympathy with him because of the indignity he suffered by being publicly beaten. He answered: Is it, after all, such a wonderful thing to endure a blow for the love of Jesus Christ? It seems to me that one cannot be a true disciple of so good a Master without rejoicing when he has to suffer some insult for his Master's sake. When it was sought to disgrace him by the most odious calumnies, he never would consent to prove his innocence, though nothing was easier; and when his friends would take up his defence, he besought them to keep

silent, lest he might lose such an excellent opportunity to suffer ignominy like the Savior. More than once he was attacked by libertines, who, not satisfied with insulting him, struck him to the ground, trampled him under foot, and left him for dead. Francis prayed for them. On one such occasion he exclaimed: "How sweet to me to suffer a little for the sake of souls whose salvation cost the Son of God so much suffering."

Yet his apostolic heart felt nothing so keenly as to be opposed or frustrated in his labors, by those especially from whom he would have expected encouragement and protection. One of his superiors ordered him to discontinue some of his works, and in others confined his zeal within narrow limits. Regis submitted without murmur as long as this trial lasted, to an inactivity a thousand times more painful to him than the severest labors of his ministry. He showed the same invincible patience on another occasion well worth recording. A pious bishop had invited the holy missionary to come and labor in his diocese. At first, the bishop was highly pleased at the success of the mission, but ere the end he unwittingly adopted the views of the enemies of our saint. Francis was summoned before the bishop, accused of imaginary indiscretions, and was about to be dismissed in disgrace from the diocese. The humbled priest cast himself on his knees before the prelate, said not one word to refute the slander, attributed to only his sins the misfortune of being dismissed from a mission for the success of which he would willingly have shed the last drop of his blood. It was then that the bishop's eyes were opened, that he discovered the wiles of the enemies of religion, and became more than ever the admirer of such heroic patience.

It was, O Jesus, in the remembrance of Thy sufferings and out of the greatness of his love for Thee, that this holy priest, whom I ardently desire to imitate, derived so much strength and courage. Draw, I beseech Thee, my heart, to meditate longingly and lovingly on the mystery of Thy holy cross. I will love Thee henceforth, and shall account it my greatest delight to give Thee, and to give myself also, the best evidence of that love by cheerfully suffering and immolating myself for Thee: "*Utrumque es nobis, Domine Jesus et speculum patiendi et præmium patientis; utrumque fortiter provocat ac vehementer accendit.*"—(St. Ber. serm. xlvii., in Cant.)

1st Point. *Ardent charity of St. Francis Regis.* Regis seemed to have only one passion, that of loving God and of making Him loved by others. Whilst yet a student or professor, he was already an apostle. As soon as he has become a missionary, he sets no bounds to his zeal. In the cities, in the country, in the churches, on public squares, everywhere he is in search of souls. God and souls, this is all that he sees. During his last sickness, he continues the work of confessions already commenced. He hears new penitents and dies in the exercise of zeal.

2d Point. *His patience.* His ministry in the missions was but a prolonged martyrdom. His patience was more admirable yet, in the ill-treatments which he suffered. "It seems to me," he said, "that one cannot call himself a disciple of Jesus Christ who does not rejoice for the affronts he suffers for Him." It was, O Jesus, in remembrance of Thy sufferings and in his ardent love for Thee, that this holy priest found so much strength and courage; attract my heart to Thee, give it grace to love to meditate on Thy passion, and fill it with Thy love.

CXVII. MEDITATION.

JUNE 21st.—ST. LOUIS OF GONZAGA.

1st.—HIS INNOCENCE.

2d.—HIS PENITENCE.

It is a mistake to suppose that these two virtues mutually exclude each other, and that the latter is out of place wherever the former is found. The Church holds up both to equal admiration in the person of Louis de Gonzaga, and from their union sketches the special character of his sanctity. Both are equally necessary for priests and pastors.—(Or. diei.) We continue the work of Jesus Christ, being with Him the mediators and public penitents; our duty is to appease God's anger and disarm His justice. But how can we perform that duty if we be not God's friends? *Si non places, non placas,* says St. Bernard, but it

is purity that confers on us that glorious privilege. "*He that loveth cleanness of heart, shall have the King for his friend.*"—(Prov. xxii : 11.) Though he was not elevated to the dignity of the priesthood, the youthful St. Gonzaga may, nevertheless, be proposed to us as an excellent model.

1st Point. *Innocence of Louis of Gonzaga.* Its perfection. Its reward.

I. The Church calls this amiable saint by the beautiful title of *Angelic Youth.* In effect, was there ever another who, by purity of body and soul, approached nearer the nature of angels? As soon as he had come to the age of discretion, prompted by the pious teachings of his saintly mother, he applied to himself these words of Holy Writ: "*My son, flee from sin as from the face of a serpent.*" "*With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issues out from it.*"—(Prov.) "*Abstain from all appearance of evil.*" Hence from his tenderest age, he was noted for his horror of sin and of all that might lead to it. What consternation filled his soul at the thought that he had offended God by taking a little powder from soldiers, and by repeating some improper words which he had heard from them, but did not understand! He was then only four years of age. Three years later, when he made his general confession, such was the intensity of his contrition that he fainted away. When they wished to console him, he exclaimed: "Ah, God is so good, and I have offended Him grievously." He looked upon himself as the greatest of sinners. He wept bitterly over what he called his disorders, and what St. Charles Borromeo would hardly call slight imperfections.

This pure life Louis Gonzaga led in the court of princes where was to be found everything calculated to dazzle the eye, to flatter the senses, and to pervert the heart. But his virtue was proof against every evil. Moses in the desert saw the strange spectacle of a bush burning without being consumed. He said to himself: "I will go and see this great sight." Behold a still more wonderful phenomenon, a young man encompassed by the flames of all passions emerges unscathed. O how good it is to bear the yoke of virtue from youth! How happy is the lot of those who walk in the way of perfect innocence! "*Blessed are the undefiled in the way.*"—(Ps. cxviii : 1.)

II. "*Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle? or who shall rest in*

Thy holy hill? He that walketh without blemish and worketh justice." —(Ps. xiv: 1, 2.) Louis of Gonzaga, the rival of angels in surpassing purity, almost equaled them also in the happiness of his saintly life. Ever absorbed in seraphic contemplation, he enjoyed the sweetest intercourse with the spouse of virgins. At an age when other children can hardly be taught to lisp a few prayers, he had already attained a sublime degree of perfection in prayer. One day his director expressed astonishment that he could spend in prayer one whole hour without the slightest distraction. I am more astonished, replied Louis, that any one in the holy presence of God can think of anything else than Him. Hence, doubtless, that serenity of soul which the Scripture compares to a continual banquet.—(Prov. xvi: 15.)

But after all, it is in heaven alone that purity receives its great, its incomparable reward. Who will grant us, there to behold St. Louis of Gonzaga. That favor having been granted for a moment to St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, she cried out in a transport of admiration: "O how dazzling is the glory of Louis, son of Ignatius! I could not have believed it if my Lord Jesus had not shown it to me. I would fain travel the world over and proclaim everywhere that Louis was a great saint. During his life, he always kept his heart open to the eyes of God. . . . That is why he is now crowned with such dazzling glory. He was a hidden martyr; for to him who loves Thee, O Lord, what martyrdon not to be capable of loving Thee as much as he desires and as Thou deservest!"

2d Point. *Penitence of Louis of Gonzaga.* The Church, in her tender solicitude for the salvation of her children, counts less on innocence preserved than on innocence recovered. Hence, hardly daring to propose to our imitation the angelic purity of Louis Gonzaga--too much does it appear a miracle of Grace—she earnestly entreats us to follow him at least in the path of penance. (*Innocentem non secuti, penitentem imitemur.*) Moreover, purity, which leads to the sight of God, necessarily leads to His love, and the spirit of sacrifice is inseparable from ardent charity. To love God and to hate oneself in a saintly way, are but one and the same thing in the language of the Gospel. O Lord, what is impossible to a heart devoted to Thee, when Thy grace sustains and animates it? Louis Gonzaga knew the use of austerities from his tenderest years, and continued them to the moment of his

death. Sensuality itself is less ingenious in devising the means to gratify its desires, than was he in finding ways to mortify himself and to suffer.

In vain do we say to ourselves, God does not require of us these austerities which we admire so much in the saints. It is none the less true that we have sins to atone for ; that to belong to Jesus Christ not only as priest, but even as mere Christian, we must crucify our flesh with its vices and concupiscences ; that there is a mortification of the heart strictly and continually obligatory, according to the Council of Trent : *The whole life of a Christian should be a perpetual penance.* We know, moreover, that we shall have to answer for all the souls confided to our care ; that we are bound, not only to instruct them, to correct them, to pray for them, but also help atone for their sins. Penitent without being sinner, such was Louis Gonzaga ; sinners without being penitent, such are we. Conscience compels the avowal ; but can we admit it without blushing and trembling ?

Dear saint, severe toward thyself alone, thou didst always bear in thy heart a compassion for thy brethren, generous even to the sacrifice of thy life ! Have pity on us ! If it has not been given thee, according to the generous impulses of thy zeal, to follow the career of the apostles, God seems to have made it up to thee by the graces of mercy and salvation which He bestows upon those who invoke thee. Help us to make up for the many precious years which we have wasted. Thy charity is ever the same, and thy power is greater in heaven than upon earth, obtain for us a sincere love of innocence and penitence, so that we too may have the happiness to see God and with thee possess Him in the kingdom of glory.

1st Point. *Innocence of Louis Gonzaga.* Its perfection, its reward. From his most tender age he applied to himself these oracles of the Scripture : " *My son, flee from sin as from the face of a serpent. With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issues out of it. Abstain from all appearance of evil.*" He had a horror for sin and for everything which might lead to it, and was entirely detached from every creature. Because of some unbecoming words which he had repeated without understanding them, he considered himself a great sin-

ner, and wept bitterly over his so-called disorders. This life so holy, he led in the very court of princes where everything is a snare for virtue. . . . Hence, how sweet and intimate his communications with God. The privilege of the pure soul is to have the King of Kings for its friend ; is there another friendship as fruitful in solid consolation? The angelic purity of Louis Gonzaga, has already been rewarded on earth ; who can tell how magnificently it has been rewarded in heaven?

2d Point. *Penitence of Louis Gonzaga.* Perfect innocence does necessarily inspire us with the love of God, and the spirit of sacrifice. Louis Gonzaga adopted the use of macerations from his tender years and continued it to the moment of his death. Never was sensuality as ingenious to procure gratifications, as this saint was to find occasions to mortify himself and suffer pains. Will I dare compare myself to this model? Louis was penitent without sins, and I am a sinner without penance.

CXVIII. MEDITATION.

JUNE 24—NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

An angel pronounced the most magnificent eulogy on this saint in saying : "*He shall be great before the Lord.*"—(Luke. i: 15.) He shall be great, not in his own estimation, nor merely in the esteem of men, but before God. But whence shall he derive all that greatness? Solely from the Messiah, whom shall he precede in the spirit and virtue of Elias, and for whom he shall prepare the way. John the Baptist is predestined and consecrated for the work of Jesus Christ. His birth and his life, his preachings and his actions, his glories and his virtues, all relate to Jesus Christ as their center, and it is especially in this respect that he becomes to us a beautiful subject for sacerdotal meditation. He reminds us of the end for which we are priests, and by his example encourages us to faithfully fulfill it.

1st.—HE WAS ALL FOR JESUS CHRIST.

2d.—HE WAS ALL JESUS CHRIST.

1st Point. *In the person of St. John the Baptist, all was for Jesus Christ.* The ministry intrusted to him and the graces which he received. To make known the Incarnate Son of God, and thereby lay the foundation of His kingdom on earth, such was the vocation of St. John the Baptist. At the very moment of his navivity, his father, prophetically inspired, exclaimed: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel!" The days of His great mercy have come. They began with thine, O blessed child! and the Messiah only awaits Thy voice to proclaim His appearance. John the Baptist is not the light which shall save the world by enlightening it; but he was born to show that light to the world. Of him Jesus will receive, not His mission, but testimony to His mission.

The servant will accredit the Master, and will put Him, so to speak, in possession of his title of Savior: "*Behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world.*"—(John. i: 29.) Is there a more sublime ministry? Does it not suffice to justify the word of the angel: "*He shall be great,*" and the words of Jesus Himself: "*There was not a greater born of woman?*" O priest of God, recognize your greatness in that of the Baptist! He is the man of Jesus Christ, commissioned to manifest Him to the world, and to open for Him the way to the hearts of men. Is not that also your glorious vocation? Was it for any other purpose that God called you while yet in your mother's womb, and chose you from all eternity?

In order to enable the precursor to fulfill his sublime ministry, Jesus Christ gives such authority to his mission as to convince all minds; and an authority of virtue and of sanctity capable of touching all hearts.

His nativity is accompanied by so many miracles, that he shall have no need to perform others to establish the truth of his testimony. Zachary, detained in the sanctuary by a heavenly apparition, the joyful tidings which he hears, the sign which is given him and which is also the punishment of his wavering faith, the sudden loss of his speech, and its recovery at the birth of the child to sing the glory of the coming Messiah, and the destiny of his new-born son—these are some of the signs which at his birth attested the mission of the Baptist.

The report of all these wonderful events spread into neighboring countries, and produced a profound impression. "*And fear came upon all their neighbors; and all these things were divulged over all the mountainous country of Judea. And all they who had heard them, laid them up in their heart saying: What an one, think ye, shall this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him.*"—(Luke i: 65, 66.) John the Baptist as soon as he is born is already known and respected as the messenger of God. If he speaks, the people are disposed to believe him.

But, it was not enough to convince minds, it was also necessary to move hearts, to free them from the slavery of evil passions and to lead them to Jesus Christ. To gain that end, the precursor of the Messiah needed extraordinary graces. He required a sanctity at once dazzling and marvellous, to attract their attention and admiration! That sanctity the Baptist evidently possessed. At a very early age he retired to the desert, "*Erat in desertis,*" and there dwelt until the day of his manifestation to Israel. What manner of life was his during that long solitude in the wilderness? A continual conversation with God and the practice of the most rigorous penance. Had he any crimes to expiate? None; he had been sanctified from his mother's womb, and as he advanced in years "he was strengthened in spirit." He appeased the justice of God in behalf of sinners to whom he was to announce the coming Messiah.

Therefore, everything connected with the Baptist, his person, his ministry, the extraordinary graces conferred on him, had special relation to Jesus Christ. Providence, in all its care and solicitude for him, always had but one thing in view, to enable him to act efficaciously on the minds and hearts of men and to prepare the way for the establishment therein of the reign of Jesus Christ. It is also precisely what God had in view in calling us to and preparing us for the priesthood, and in lavishing upon us so many means of sanctification. All the extraordinary graces bestowed on us during our clerical education, in our ordination, and since our elevation to the priesthood have but one object, to make us saints and worthy ministers of Jesus Christ. O my God! would that I had responded to the designs of Thy grace as did Thy precursor!

2d Point. *In the person of St. John the Baptist all was Jesus Christ's.* As he had received no other mission than to give testimony

to the Messiah, so he did nothing but render that testimony. "*Hic venit in testimonium, ut testimonium perhiberet.*"—(John i: 7.) To that he consecrated his whole life, and in that he is the perfect model of all apostolic men. The fire of zeal burns in his heart, and an eminent sanctity shines forth in all his actions. He terrifies by his threats, he persuades by his example, he enlightens by his instructions, he edifies by his humility, he sustains the honor of his ministry by an invincible firmness. All these characteristics ought, to a certain extent, be found in us if we really possess the true spirit of the priesthood.

John the Baptist preached by his presence alone. Before he had opened his mouth, his ascetic face, his austere life, had conveyed the impression that he was thoroughly convinced of the necessity of penance. When a man has been thirty years preparing himself to receive his ministry of precursor, he has a right to say to others: "*Parate viam Domini, prepare ye the way of the Lord.*"

In order all the more efficaciously to exhort the people to do penance, he struck terror into their souls, well convinced as he was that fear is generally the most powerful check on bad passions, and the best incentive to good: "*Ye brood of vipers,*" *he exclaims,* "*who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruit worthy of penance. . . . For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every one, therefore, that yieldeth not good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire.*"—(Mat. iii.)

But if his menaces are so terrifying, his moral precepts are full of wisdom and moderation. They are accommodated to every condition of life. To the rich, who ask him what they must do to be saved, he does not say, "give up your riches;" but, "*give alms of what remaineth.*" Of the same moderate nature are his instructions to soldiers and Publicans. He is ever exact, he never exaggerates.

His labors are crowned with unheard of success. He is taken for Elias, or for one of the ancient prophets risen from the dead. It is supposed even that he is the promised Messiah himself. Far from suffering himself to be inflated at the glory of such reputation, he only finds in it the opportunity for self-abasement and the assertion of his own nothingness. "*Ego vox clamantis in deserto.*" How great the agitation of his humble heart, when Jesus asks to be baptized at his hands. What sorrow rent his soul, when some zealous disciples complained to

him: "*Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond the Jordan . . . behold, He baptizeth, and all men come to Him?*"—(John. iii: 26.) "*Know ye not,*" *He answered,* "*that He must increase, but I must decrease.*"—(J. iii: 30.) Oh, how rare it is to remain humble in the glory of a great success! Vanity is a vice of which preachers are often accused, and does it not seem that they are accused of it every time they are praised.

John the Baptist preached the truth on the banks of the Jordan, and he will preach it also before the whole court. He will proclaim even to the very ear of the King these intrepid words: *Non licet—it is not lawful for thee.* He attacks scandal with intrepidity. He is cast into prison; he is put to death. Is there any reward more worthy of the ambition of a faithful minister? Living and dying, the precursor of Jesus Christ gives testimony of his Master. He gave all that he was and all that he had to Jesus Christ.

Amiable Savior, Thou desirest now, as then, to enter into souls and bring them peace and salvation. Send, therefore, other holy precursors to prepare Thy way before Thee. Make all Thy priests like St. John the Baptist—burning and shining lights, so that they may unite to that life which enlighteneth the charity which enflameth. *Tantum lucere vanum, tantum ardere parum, ardere et lucere perfectum.*—(St. Bern. serm. in Nat. St. Joan. B.)

1st Point. *In the person of St. John the Baptist, all is for Jesus Christ.* The ministries confided to him, the graces bestowed on him.

I. He is called to make the Savior known, and to lay the foundation of His kingdom here below. This his father foretold at the moment of his birth. This child shall not be the light of the world; but he is born in the world in order to make it known. . . . O priest of God, recognize your greatness in the greatness of St. John the Baptist. His mission is yours.

II. In order to accomplish his ministry, he had need of extraordinary graces; they were granted to him. The wonders which accompanied his nativity; the eminent holiness of his life, enabled him to act with efficacy upon the minds and hearts of men. All the graces which were lavished upon me up to this day, were given for one object only; that I might become a saint, and be qualified to lead others unto sanc-

tity. Have I, O Jesus, responded to Thy designs as faithfully as Thy precursor.

2d Point. *In the person of John the Baptist, everything is Jesus Christ's.* He was sent on earth for Him alone; he does not save for Him. He enlightens by his instructions; persuades by his examples; edifies by his humility, sustains the honor of his ministry by his invincible firmness. Living and dying, he is the witness of Jesus Christ. *Lucere vanum, ardere parum, ardere et lucere perfectum.*

CXIX. MEDITATION.

JUNE 29.—SAINT PETER APPOINTED HEAD OF THE CHURCH—CONTEMPLATION.

1st.—CONTEMPLATE THE PERSONS.

2d.—HEAR THE WORDS.

3d.—CONSIDER THE ACTIONS.

FIRST PRELUDE.—"After they had eaten, *Jesus saith to Simon Peter: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?*" Questioned thrice by the Savior, Peter thrice answers that he loves Him and receives from Him the charge of governing the whole Church. Then his Master foretells Peter by what death he would glorify Him.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Represent to yourself the shore of Tiberias, and gathered around Jesus, His apostles, who had just partaken of the food which Himself had prepared for them.

THIRD PRELUDE.—Ask of God the grace to fully understand the meaning of the words addressed to St. Peter on that occasion, and to enter into the dispositions of the holy apostle.

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons.* These are the disciples who had fruitlessly labored with Peter throughout the night, who now recognize Jesus by His power and goodness, but who fear to tell Him so.

Their joy is restrained by awe, and this awe heightens the sweetness of their joy, by calming it. They study His looks, His whole exterior, and lose not a single one of His words ; not one of them seems either surprised or jealous, at his honoring Peter more than the others. They had already heard Him making Peter this promise : "*Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church.*"—It is Peter, whose heart, overwhelmed with grief and shame, needs consolation by some manifestation of His love. The more does Jesus seem to have forgotten his crime, the more does he himself reflect on it. Note the expression of sorrow his features assume when the Savior puts him that question the third time. Shall he again be unfortunately mistaken as to his own feelings? He fears so.—Contemplate the Son of God risen from the dead who comes to comfort His apostles, to confirm them in their faith, their hope, and their love. He reads in the soul of Peter a desire to atone for his fall, with what touching delicacy He provides the occasion therefor, whilst at the same time He instructs all the pastors of His Church, in revealing to them His tender solicitude for the salvation of souls.

2d and 3d Points. *Hear the words and consider the actions.* As He was soon to leave the world and return to His Father, the hour had come for the Redeemer to invest with supreme authority the apostle whom He had chosen to be His visible representative upon earth. But He would have it well understood that this preëminence of dignity and of power is granted to only a preëminence of love. In presence of the other disciples who had just finished their repast, He says to Peter : "*Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?*" Peter answers : "*Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.*" Jesus continues : "*Feed My lambs.*" It meant for Peter and for all those who, in the Church, exercise the office of pastor of souls, "Learn how dear those souls are to Me! The best proof that you can give Me of your love is to teach them, to guide them, and to save them. In this office you will need great patience, meekness, self-abnegation ; but you shall have all that if you love Me, and nothing but your love for Me can secure it for you." In effect, what is the life of a true pastor but a life of prayer, and study, and labor, and devotedness to duty, and frequent occasions for sufferings? But in order to persevere in this life of self-denial, we must be sustained by that energy which springs from charity.

The answer of Peter is an humble one. He does not say "Thou knowest that I love Thee more than the others." He is satisfied in asserting his love. Since his fall he mistrusts himself, and is careful not to prefer himself to any one. O my God, when shall I profit by the lessons which the experience of my weakness continually teaches me! Alas, how far I am from such a disposition! Nay, it would seem that my pride increases in proportion as I have the best reasons to become humble.

Jesus does not stop at a first question. He questions His apostle a second and a third time. Does He not know that He will trouble the heart of Peter? He knows it, but a triple protestation of attachment is necessary to expiate a triple denial, "*Ne minus amori lingua serviat quam timori.*"—(St. Aug.) Those who are called to the direction of souls. must be taught that the duties of that office mean something more than little outbursts of devotion; that they require a generous love, a charity full of zeal and of constancy. After the moment of painful trial for the penitent apostle, Jesus lavishes favors on him. He does not say simply as before: "*Feed My lambs*," but He adds: "*Feed My sheep.*" Lambs and sheep, pastors and people, the whole Church, is confided to his care. The charge laid upon him is the reward of his love; the zeal with which he will discharge the duties of that high office will be another proof of that love. Nor is it the innocent love of John that is elevated to that sublime dignity; it is the repentant love of Peter. Thus, O Lord, Thou dost treat a great sinner, why then should I lose courage at the thought of my sins!

In appointing Peter visible head of the universal Church, what does the Savior promise and foretell him? Persecutions, martyrdom, the death of the cross. "*Amen, amen, I say to thee, when thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself, and didst walk where thou wouldst.*" Before the care of souls was confided to us, we could have enjoyed a certain degree of liberty; that liberty we enjoy not since we became pastors. We now belong to our flock. We owe them all our time, our whole existence. Before that we had only our own little burdens to bear, now we have to endure our own and our people's sufferings. "*When thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldst not. And this, he said, signifying by what death he should glorify God.*"—(John xxi: 18, 19.) This girdle wherewith Peter was to be girded, and the

violence which was to be done him, indicated the chains with which he was to be loaded, the tortures he should suffer, and those outstretched hands symbolized the kind of death he was to die. But, do good pastors and martyrs really go to the stake and to the cross against their will? they desire them ; by the impulse of nature, *He will lead thee whither thou wouldst not.* By the impulse of grace, they shrink from them. Who is he, asks St. Augustine, who loves affliction and pain? Therefore, O Lord, Thou dost not command us to love them, but only to suffer them.

To love souls, and to love Jesus Christ in souls, to the loss of repose, of health, and even of live itself. "*I shall spend myself and be spent for your souls;*" that is the example which the apostles and all truly apostolic men have left us. O Jesus, give us the grace to honor so lovely and so admirable a vocation ; to always follow Thee whithersoever it may please Thee to lead us, without hesitating because of the unwillingness of our nature; always ready to glorify Thee by our life and by our death, ever happy if we are called upon to sacrifice either to the love of Thee.

1st Point. *Behold the persons.* They are the disciples who shared with St. Peter the fruitless labors of the night, and who rejoice with him for the miraculous fishing. We see Peter whose heart, oppressed with grief, feels the want of alleviating it by some exterior manifestation of his love. Behold Jesus Christ reading in the heart of Peter the desire to atone for his triple denial.

2d and 3d Points. *Hear the words, consider the actions.* For the Savior, the hour has come to invest with supreme authority the disciple whom He chose to be His vice-gerent. He questions Peter concerning his love, and, as an evidence of it, He demands of him to consecrate himself entirely to the salvation of souls. The answer is humble. Peter contents himself with offering his love ; does not prefer himself to any one. Jesus does not stop after the first question, and though He will afflict the heart of Peter, He asks for a triple declaration of repentence and love. The declaration is made, and as a reward of it, the Savior confides to a great sinner the care of his whole Church, of the lambs and of the sheep. Why should I become discouraged at the remembrance of my sins? To love souls, and Jesus Christ in the souls of men,

is the example left to my imitation by the apostles and men really apostolic.

CXX. MEDITATION.

JULY 2.—VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

This journey of Mary, going to visit Elizabeth, has been compared to that of the Son of God coming to visit human nature through the mystery of the incarnation. Both ought to serve as models for priests in their intercourse with the people. Meditating on these two visits, we find that,—

1st.—THEIR MOTIVE WAS CHARITY.

2d.—THEY WERE PERFORMED IN HUMILITY.

3d.—THE SANCTIFICATION OF SOULS WAS THEIR AIM.

1st Point. *Charity is the only motive which induced the Son of God to visit mankind, and the holy virgin to visit Elizabeth.* Although the Word, Son of God, and God Himself, fills all with His immensity, yet the mystery of His incarnation is represented by the Holy Ghost under the idea of a voyage or visit. "*I came forth from the Father and am come into the world.*"—(John xvi: 28.) "*The Orient from on high has visited us.*"—(Luc. i: 78.) But where did the Lord get the motive for a design so beneficial to us? Nowhere else than in His love for man. "*God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son*"—(John iii: 16), and not only the world, but each man in particular. "*Who loved me, and delivered Himself for me.*" That project was conceived in the *bowels of His mercy.* He could not consent to let us perish without hope; His compassion and His love triumphed over every consideration of His justice.

The same, with proper allowance, may be said of the visit which the august virgin paid on this day. As she has, so to say, but the same heart and the same mind as the adorable child she carries in her womb, she also is moved by the principle of action. "If," says St. Ambrose,

"she undertakes this journey, it is not because she has the least doubt as to the truth of what the angel said to her, and that she desires to satisfy herself of its reality," "*Non quasi incredula de oraculo, nec quasi incerta de nuntio.*"—(St. Aug.) Neither is she impelled thereto by a merely natural love for those who are bound to her by ties of kindred. She had shown, at a very tender age, how she could separate herself from all who were near and dear to her, and it required all the power of charity to make her leave retreat. She wishes to congratulate Elizabeth and to rejoice with her because of the great mercies of the Lord toward her. In the present condition of her cousin, she might need the virgin's services. Mary goes to offer her aid. Finally, she has to communicate the treasures of grace which God so bountifully bestowed on her; she carries the blessings of her son to a family well prepared to receive them.

Thus, all bespeaks charity by the way the Evangelist relates this journey. Mary went in haste and with fervor. *Mary, rising up in those days, went with haste.* She was inspired with courage to surmount difficulties: neither the roughness of the road nor the height of the mountains could deter her. *She went into the mountains.* Are not those the two principal qualities of Divine love? "*Nihil dulcius est amore, nihil fortius. Amans volat, currit, et lætatur.*"—(Im. l. iii: c. v.)

Do all the journeys of priests resemble those of Jesus and Mary? Is charity always their motive? Alas, how many useless excursions, how many visits which are prompted by sloth, curiosity and dislike of solitude and of a serious life! When the glory of God, or the welfare of our neighbor, requires that we should go from home, do we start promptly on our journey? Can a zealous pastor be free of anxiety when there is question of carrying to souls, of which he is the father, truth, peace, and God Himself? Oh, no! He does not weigh for an instant the sacrifice of his repose, his tastes, nor even the saintly joys of the sweetest intercourse with his Lord.

2d Point. *Humility of the Son of God, visiting mankind through the incarnation, and of Mary visiting Elizabeth.* Jesus Christ, impelled solely by His love to visit human nature, comes down from the splendors of His glory to the nothingness of our flesh. In another meditation we have considered, as it were, five different degrees by

which the eternal word, in becoming incarnate, reached the lowest abyss of self-abasement possible even to God : *Homo factus est. Formam servi accipiens. Verbum caro factum est. In similitudinem carnis peccati. Exinanivit semetipsum.*

The blessed virgin, in her visit to Elizabeth, admirably imitates the humility of her Son. Humility was indeed the virtue of her life, and of every position in which she was placed. In this circumstance, however, it seems to have attained a still higher perfection. It was just at the time of her elevation to the incomprehensible dignity of mother of God, that she calls herself servant-handmaid. "*Behold the handmaid.*" But whose? The Lord's, "*Domini.*" In her visit to St. Elizabeth, she makes herself the servant of a person who was greatly her inferior. She does not wait for her cousin to come and visit her, she takes the initiative. What wonderful humility in the silence which she keeps concerning that great event of which she alone holds the secret. The most urgent motives seem to require that she should speak. Since the word became incarnate in her womb, should she not, for the glory of God and the consolation of Israel, proclaim that mystery which had been so long and so ardently desired? Why does she not reveal it at least to St. Joseph? Mary's wisdom, and her rule of conduct are her own secret. Her Son and her God humbles Himself ; could she exalt herself? He hides Himself in obscurity, would she desire publicity? He is silent, she follows His example, and says not a word of the choice which heaven has made of her for the most glorious of destinies ; till Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Ghost, in a transport of joy, exclaims : "*Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my God should come to me?*"—(Luke i : 42, 43.)

Now that the secret is revealed, Mary herself will speak. It is now a duty for her ; humility as well as gratitude call for it. She must refer to God all the honor they would do her, and reserve for herself naught but her own nothingness. "You praise me," she answers, "and you congratulate me, you extol me above all other women ; as for me, I praise, bless and glorify the Lord alone." "*My soul doth magnify the Lord.*" I know that He, who is Almighty, hath done great things to me, and that all generations shall call me blessed. Blessed am I indeed ; but why? Because "*He hath regarded the*

humility of His handmaid." He willed to descend to the lowest degree of self-abasement; only in my misery did He find the depth of the abyss which He sought. Such are Mary's sentiments regarding herself. She looked upon herself as the most undeserving of all creatures, and hence God preferred her before all others, and elevated her to the greatest dignity. Humility will ever be the only way to arrive at greatness, the only solid foundation for all Christian and sacerdotal virtues, the most essential disposition to receive God's most excellent graces and gifts; the most indispensable condition for co-operating in the great work of the redemption of mankind.

3d Point. *The sanctification of souls is the only object of the incarnation of Jesus, and of the visitation of Mary.* Jesus Christ came upon earth solely to bring happiness as well as holiness to the world. To deliver mankind from the slavery of sin and of evil passions, to place them under the dominion of grace and peace; that is the end and aim of His coming, the fruit He would gather from His death. All the mysteries of redemption relate to the perfection of the saints. The great object of Mary's visitation was also to purify John the Baptist, and to fill with heavenly joy the whole house of Zachary. "*When Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb.*"—(Luke i: 41.)

O blessed mother, how many souls shall participate in the fruits of thy visit to the precursor of Jesus! Many also are they whose sanctification thou providest for, when thou dost co-operate to the sanctification of a priest or a pastor. Since grace begins already to flow through thy hands, the first grace we ask of thee is to make us understand how much we may rely on thy maternal meditation and how to turn it to the best advantage. May it serve to enlighten us with the light of God's grace, as it did the Baptist and his mother, and to sanctify us by His Holy Spirit. May it serve, according to the designs of thy Son, to make us less unworthy to represent Him amongst men, and more faithful to fulfill the duties of our calling by procuring the salvation of our brethren.

1st Point. *Charity of Jesus Christ visiting the human race, and of Mary visiting Elizabeth.* The mystery of the incarnation is represented

to us under the image of a visit. The project of this visit was conceived in the bowels of Divine mercy. What is also the motive which determines the holy virgin to visit her cousin? She intends to congratulate her and to offer her services. She wishes to carry the blessings of her Son to a family which is well prepared to receive them. . . . Do all my communications with my neighbor have the same principle and the same end? . . . . Am I prompt in sacrificing my inclinations, whenever the glory of God or my neighbor's welfare demand that I should go out of the house, or leave an occupation which is pleasing?

2d Point. *Humility of Jesus Christ in visiting men through the incarnation, and of Mary in visiting Elizabeth.* Jesus, from the splendors of glory, descends to very nothingness. Mary, the great mother of God, lowers herself down to the humble condition of a handmaid. She does not wait for Elizabeth, she anticipates. How great her humility in her silence respecting her grandeurs. How great her humility in her speech.

3d Point. *The sanctification of souls is the only end of the incarnation of the Son, and of the visitation of the mother.* To deliver men from sin, to put them under the empire of grace, to make saints, is the fruit which Jesus desires to gather from His life and His death; and Mary desires no other fruit of her visitation save to sanctify St. John the Baptist, and through him to prepare the sanctification of many others.

CXXI MEDITATION.

JULY 16th—OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMÈL—THE SCAPULAR OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN.

The confraternity of the scapular was established by Mary herself, who revealed it to blessed Simon Stock, sixth general of the Carmelites. This saint was born in 1164, of an illustrious family of England. At the age of twelve years he retired into a vast forest, where he practiced all the austerities of the ancient solitaries. The hollow of an old

oak was his dwelling, the water trickling from the rocks was his drink, herbs and roots were his food, and prayer was his occupation. He lived in this manner for twenty years, when two English nobles, returning from the Holy Land, brought with them some religious of Mount Carmel. Simon, greatly moved by their piety toward the queen of heaven, joined them, and six years after he was appointed general of their order.

One day, in an outburst of filial confidence, he complained to Mary of the persecutions waged against his venerable order, which seemed to be on the point of dissolution, and with tears he besought her not to forsake a religious family which she had taken under her patronage, and to give it some sign of her maternal protection. The august virgin, encompassed by a halo of heavenly light, appeared to him, and presenting a scapular, said to him: "My son, receive this scapular as a sign of the privilege which I have obtained for thee and for the children of Carmel. Whosoever shall die, invested with this habit, shall be preserved from the fire of hell. It is a sign of salvation, a safe-guard against peril, the pledge of a special peace and protection."

The saint, full of joy, showed the precious gift he had received, not only for the Carmelites, but also for the whole Christian world. Very soon, persons very distinguished for their piety and their rank, began to enter the order. St. Louis, Blanche of Castille, and the whole royal family of France, were the first to be invested with the holy habit; and the confraternity of the scapular, authorized and encouraged by the Popes, spread rapidly in every Catholic country of the world.

Half a century afterward, Mary again deigned to appear, this time to Pope John XXII. She directed him to confirm and proclaim the graces, privileges and favors which her Divine Son, at her request, had granted to the religious and confraternities of Mount Carmel, adding, that, as a compassionate mother, she would visit Purgatory every Saturday to console the souls of her children, who died wearing her habit.[1]

1. Benedict XIV, speaking of the first of these two visions, distinctly declares that he believes in it, and that all should look upon it as a reality. He also defends the second. Many other sovereign pontiffs, in solemn judgments, thought it their duty to extol these signal favors. They have exhorted the faithful to wear the scapular, and they have recompensed with numerous indulgences this testimony of piety toward Mary. Among others, Alexander V, Clement VII, Paul III, St. Pius V, Gregory XIII, Paul V, Clement X, Innocent XI.

1st.—THE DEVOTION OF THE SCAPULAR IS EXCELLENT IN ITSELF.

2d.—MORE EXCELLENT STILL IN THE PRIVILEGES ATTACHED TO IT.

3d.—PRACTICE OF THIS DEVOTION.

1st Point. *Excellence of the scapular devotion considered in itself.* Were we to see in the confraternity of the scapular nothing but the thought of showing our zeal for the glory of the most holy virgin, by wearing this habit as a testimony of our devotion to her, we should not doubt that the practice would be most pleasing to her, and a most powerful means of securing for ourselves her benevolent protection. If after the example of the heavenly Father, who commands. His sun to ripen the harvest of the sinner as well as that of the just man, Mary does good even to those who forget her or offend her, how tenderly shall the eyes of her mercy look down upon those who continually strive to show her proofs of their love? Among all the devotions whose object is to honor the mother of God, this one has two advantages which it is important to consider, namely, the publicity and continuity of the homage which it renders her.

I. Public homage. When I come to consecrate myself to the mother of God, to receive solemnly at the foot of her altar, the sign of my consecration to her service, to wear it in her honor all the days of my life, I am no longer satisfied to love her only in the secret of my heart, I must make open profession of that love. Though the essence of piety is in the heart, it is none the less true that one is little devoted to her when he is afraid to show it, and if the Savior will be ashamed before His Father in heaven, of the cowardly Christian who is ashamed of Him before men, Mary, also, will ever make an essential distinction between the timid servant, who is afraid to be seen when he honors her, and the servant, who, enrolling himself under her banner, shows that he is proud of wearing her livery, proud of belonging to her, of being loyal to her as his queen, and of loving her as his mother.

II. Continual homage. Our other practices are annexed to certain times and to certain places; the devotion of the scapular belongs to all times and places. Thanks to my little habit, wherever I am, whatever I am doing, Mary never sees me without seeing upon me the authentic

evidence of my devotion to her service. Always and everywhere my scapular pleads with her for me, recommends me to her tenderness, tells her that I love her, and that I confide all my interests to her maternal care.

2d Point. *Excellence of the scapular devotion considered in the privileges attached to it.* In admitting me into her family of Carmel, Mary promises me three great favors. She will protect me in danger, she will help me to die well, she will promptly and efficaciously aid me after death. It is she herself who has assumed all these obligations in my regard.

I. She undertakes to protect me in danger, *salus in periculis.* But I allude only to the dangers of salvation. 'Tis true that on account of my vocation, I have the house of God for my dwelling; but am I there sheltered from every danger? The more holy and fruitful in solid happiness is my state of life, the more it excites the jealous anger of Satan. Yet if Mary protects me, whom have I to fear? Am I less safe in her maternal bosom, than in the bosom of Abraham? How consoling the assurance she herself gives me of her protection! If it is sweet to recall to mind that she has never been invoked in vain, how much sweeter it is to hear from her own lips the assurance that she will protect me in peril, even before I shall have invoked her aid. One day, I shall know what temptations she diminished or dissipated, in consideration of this pledge of my love for her; how often, after my fall, she preserved me from a discouragement far more fatal than my sins themselves.

II. She undertakes to save me. "Whosoever shall die invested in this habit, shall not undergo the torments of hell." When Mary takes upon herself in my regard such an astounding obligation as that, because it surpasses even my highest expectations, it is as if she were to say: As long as I shall see you clothed in that habit which is the distinguishing mark of all my beloved children, this evidence of your affection for me will always inspire me with the most vigilant and tender love toward you. I will obtain for you such abundant graces as will make the practice of virtue easy for you, namely, time to live a good life, the occasion and the means to perform good works, constant perseverance in justice. Should you have the misfortune to incur the anger of my Son, even then, if I should see on you the symbol of alli-

ance with me, I will not abandon you, I shall find for you in the treasures of heaven a grace so powerful that it will soften your heart and change your will. Unless by obstinately resisting all my loving endeavors, you compel me to expel you from my family, and strip you of my livery, my kindness toward you will go as far as that purified by the sacraments, or by an act of perfect contrition ; dying with this holy habit on, you shall not fall into the hands of God's inexorable justice.

III. Finally, Mary undertakes to effectively aid me in Purgatory and to shorten the term of my purgation. She will visit, according to her own promise, the members of Carmel in that land of sorrow where they must totally expiate their imperfections. Who can doubt that this visit will bring them refreshment, light, and peace? She herself has declared it. "When they shall have quitted this life and entered into Purgatory, I, their mother, will visit them and console them the first Saturday after their death, I shall deliver thence all my children that I shall find there, and will lead them upon the holy mountain of life eternal."[1]

3d Point. *Practice of the scapular devotion.* Nothing is easier than the exercise of this devotion, if we consider only its exterior, but is it then a true and reliable one? I ought to try and enter into the spirit of it, and fulfill, with exactitude, all that is prescribed, either to be a member of the confraternity, or to partake of the favors attached thereto, and also be docile to the silent lessons the holy habit teaches me.

The blessed habit of the immaculate virgin, teaches me to be innocent and to flee every occasion of sin. It is the seal of the alliance

1. These are the words of Mary contained in the bull of John XXII and known under the name Sabbatine, and confirmed by many of the sovereign pontiffs, his successors.

To obtain the first privilege of the scapular and to gain the indulgences, of the confraternity, as well as to have a share in the merits of the Carmelite order, it is necessary to join the confraternity, receive and wear the scapular, and have it on at the moment of death.

To have part in the privileges of the bull Sabbatine, besides the preceding conditions it is prescribed to observe chastity according to one's state of life, and to recite every day the canonical office, or the title office of the blessed virgin, following the Roman brieviary. If one can't read, he must observe the feasts of the Church, abstain Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, except Christmas day, should it fall on either of these days. When there is some grave impediment, the members of the confraternity are bound neither to fast, nor to recite the office, nor abstain Wednesday and Saturday. In this case, however, the faithful ought to be induced to abide by the judgment of a learned and prudent confessor, and, if necessary, obtain some commutation.—(Cong. of Indul. Aug. 12, 1840. June 22, 1842, etc., P. Maurel.)

which I have entered into with her, and the particular sign of those who have adopted her as their mother. It exhorts me to count all my footsteps, to watch over all my actions, to purify all my intentions, to leave undone nothing that would contribute to my sanctification, or to the edification of my neighbor ; for, it is by this, that Mary recognizes her children, and discovers her own likeness in them. It is a sign of predestination and election. Therefore, when I am invested in it, I ought also, put on charity, meekness, contempt of self, modesty, justice, in one word, all that makes the saints and the elect of God.

August virgin, I am confounded at the thought of your goodness to me, and my ingratitude toward you ! How many reproaches are made me by that precious gift which is the pledge of my reception into your Carmelite family ! Ah, how many times I have dishonored it ! But however unworthy I may be to call you mother, continue, I pray you, to show yourself a mother to me. That your blessed habit may always be my ornament and my defence. That I may be clothed in it at the moment of my death ; that it may be to me now a habit of justice, to be one day changed into a vestment of glory and happy immortality !

1st Point. *Excellence of the devotion of the scapulur, considered in itself.* The first object of the confraternity is an open profession of our devotion to the blessed virgin, through the publicity and continuity of our homages. These homages are public ; for we glory in wearing her livery ; they are also continual. Mary sees always upon my person the authentical evidence of my zeal to honor her. At all times and everywhere, my scapular speaks for me to her and recommends me to her love.

2d Point. *Excellence of the devotion of the scapular considered in its privileges.* I. Mary promises to protect me in the midst of perils. If she is for me, who shall be against me? She has obligated herself to save me. Whoever will die wearing this habit shall not suffer the torments of hell. II. This amounts to saying : "Except you will resist obstinately my tenderness, and force me to reject you out of my family, by stripping you of my livery, I shall conduct you to eternal happiness." III. She has bound herself to assist me in Purgatory, and to shorten for me the duration of its pains.

3d Point. *Practice of this devotion.* The exterior part of the devotion is easily accomplished ; but we should enter the spirit of it, by hearing with docility the silent lessons which the scapular habit teaches us.

CXXII. MEDITATION.

JULY 19.—SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL—*I was the father of the poor.*—(Job. xxix : 16.)

The saint whose memory is to-day honored by the Church, often said : " Ah, what a great thing is a good priest ! What can he not do, what does he not do, with the aid of God's grace?" He was himself the proof of that. Born of poor parents in a province of Southern France, he was first employed as herdsman. It was whilst in that humble position that God chose him to become the instrument of His great designs. After his ordination to the priesthood, a chain of providential events led him to Paris, where, having had charge of two parishes in succession, and with his fame always rising, he found himself almost unawares at the head of all the good works of his time. He sought and discovered a remedy, or at least a consolation, for all the ills of humanity. His generous compassion embraced the unfortunate of all classes, the young, the aged, the sick, the convicts, the galley-slaves, the insane. France is covered with monuments of his charity and zeal ; and what is still more admirable, in the midst of all his glorious works, he sought nothing but oblivion. He died in Paris in the year 1660, aged eighty-five years. To confine ourselves, in so extensive a subject, within reasonable limits, we shall only consider in this holy priest

1st.—HIS LOVE FOR THE POOR IN GENERAL.

2d.—HIS ZEAL FOR THE SALVATION OF THE POOR.

1st Point. *Love of Saint Vincent de Paul for the poor.* From his childhood he would strip himself in order to clothe the naked, deprive

himself of food in order to give to the hungry. The many associations founded and directed by him, the many hospitals he had built, the many aids he procured for whole provinces ravaged by war, famine and pestilence, the many considerable sums of money he distributed to the slaves of Barbary, and to the Christians of Mount Lebanon, all his enterprises, his whole life, in fact, attest his wonderful love for the poor. It was for the poor he established the Sisters of Charity, who pride themselves on being the servants of the poor; for them he gave the Church a new congregation of sacred ministers.

"We are the priests of the poor," he said to his missionaries, "God has chosen us for them. They are our capital, the rest is but contingent stock."

The sight of the poor, even their names alone, made an impression on him which he could not contain. His voice melted into tenderness every time he pronounced this invocation: *Jesu pater pauperum, misere nobis.* He suffered by anticipation when he foresaw they would have to suffer. At the beginning of a winter which gave indications of being exceptionally severe, he said to one of his friends: "What will the poor do? Where shall they go? That I confess, is the weight and the sorrow that oppress my heart. These poor people say that as long as they shall have fruits they will live; but that after all the fruits are gone, all they can do is to dig their graves and bury themselves alive. O God, what extreme misery, and where is the remedy?"

In his exhortations to the community, he spoke often of the poor. He would say: "God loves them and consequently He loves all those who love them; for, when one has a special affection for any one, one has the same feeling toward his friends and servants. Let us, therefore, my brethren, labor with renewed zeal in behalf of the poor who are the well-beloved friends of God. Let us only hope that for the love of them He will love us also. All who, during life, love the poor, will have nothing to fear at the hour of death. I have seen the proof of it, and, therefore, I am accustomed to instil this maxim into the minds of people whom I know to be fearful of death."

Though he had for his children the tenderness of a father, he seemed to love them only in regard to the poor, as he loved the poor only in relation to God. "Let us never," he said, "have the complaint made of us which the Lord made through the mouth of His prophet: 'I looked

for one who would grieve together with Me, but there was none."—(Ps. lxxiii : 21.) He wished that all should have such compassion for the unfortunate, that their appearance alone would suggest the thought : "*These are men of mercy.*" O priest, examine your heart and your works. Do you love the poor? Are you sensible to their sufferings? Do you enter into their sorrows with a view to solace and console them as much as you can? Do you love them as a priest should, especially in regard to their eternal salvation?

2d Point. *Zeal of St. Vincent de Paul for the salvation of the poor*, To be their consoler and their father in the highest sense, he wished to be their apostle. Three particular motives urged him thereto, namely, the extreme need which the poor ordinarily have of spiritual aid, the distinguished rank they hold in the *mind* of the Church, and the more easy and abundant fruit which the priestly minister gathers amongst them.

I. St. Vincent had learned in what ignorance of religious truth, and, consequently, in what corruption the poor both of the city and the country wallowed. He knew that, even in the few asylums then open to the unfortunate, if some little care was given to their bodily ailments, those of the soul were extremely neglected. He had seen the deplorable condition of the galley-slaves under both aspects. It was more than enough to inflame his zeal. He gathers around him a few good priests, kindles in their hearts the charity of Jesus Christ, and sends them to the rescue of so many perishing souls. He gets together some devoted virgins whom he consecrates to the work of the sanctification of the poor, and who, whilst attending to the temporal ills of the unfortunate, would have special care to prepare them for the worthy reception of the sacraments by prayers, pious example, kind exhortations and wise counsels. He proposes the same object to some pious ladies whom he joins to the work of his apostolate in hospitals and prisons. Everywhere his success was prodigious. In the space of one year, there were in the Hotel Dieu of Paris alone, upward of seven hundred and sixty abjurations of error, and returns to the Catholic Church. From that we may judge of the other conversions.

II. A second motive animated and sustained Vincent in his labors for the salvation of the poor, that is, their iminent dignity, viewed from

a standpoint of faith. "The Church," says Bossouet, "in its first outlines, was built only for the poor. They are the original citizens of that blessed city which Holy Writ calls the city of God." Does not the Savior Himself declare that they are the special object of His mission on earth? "*To preach the Gospel to the poor He hath sent me.*" He begins His sermon on the mount, and the whole course of His discourses by congratulating the poor, whilst he has nothing but maledictions for the rich. "*Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of God!*" If heaven, which is God's eternal kingdom, is theirs, the Church, which is God's kingdom upon earth, is theirs too. In effect they shall be the first to enter there. "*For see your vocation, brethren, that not many are wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble.*"—(I. Cor. i : 26.)

We know with what consideration the poor were held by the great apostle of the Gentiles. He sets the whole Church praying: "*I beseech you that you may help me in your prayers.*" What does he then wish to obtain? "*That the oblation of my services may be acceptable in Jerusalem to the saints.*"—(Rom. xv : 30, 31.) He considers them the chief members of the body of Jesus Christ, the favorites of the Divine King. Hence also the respect which St. Vincent de Paul had for them. He made them eat at his own table, and had them served first of all. He said to his friends: "Let us look upon them as our lords and masters."

III. Again, that which induced him to take up in preference to any other, the work of the sanctification of the poor, is that the exercise of the sacred ministry amongst them is accompanied with less danger and more consoling fruits. Our intercourse with the rich might well inspire us with love for the world; it might flatter our evil inclinations. To how many temptations of vainglory, of satisfactions entirely human, does it not expose us? With the poor we have a continual opportunity of practicing humility, patience and mortification. We do not need to have recourse to so many precautions, our zeal is exercised with more independence. As to success, we know how much it costs the rich to submit to the practice of Christian morality. The Savior Himself seems terrified at the difficulty. "*How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.*"—(Luke xviii : 24.) The poor, on the contrary, are prepared for it, by the very life they live. What docility in the latter, what obstinate resistance in the former!

Let us add, that just as we scandalize the people if we appear to esteem but the souls of the rich, so also we edify when we imitate Jesus Christ in the loving care which He devoted to the salvation of the poor. An obstinate heretic one day said to St. Vincent, that what most kept him away from the Catholic Church was to see so many of her ministers leading an indolent life in the cities, whilst the country people were deprived of the most elementary instructions. But the example of Vincent and of those who shared his labors, happily served to undeceive him. The following year he came to see the saint and said to him : "I now believe that the Holy Ghost directs the Roman Church, since she cares for the salvation of the village poor. I am ready to be received into the Church as soon as you please to receive me."

In our preparation for Mass and in our thanksgiving after, let us beseech the Lord Jesus Christ to communicate to us the spirit of this saint who devoted himself so generously, and labored with so much success, himself and his co-laborers, to the alleviation of the miseries, and to the eternal happiness of the poor.

1st Point. *Love of St. Vincent de Paul for the poor.* All his enterprises, his foundations, his works, testified to his ardent and compassionate charity for the poor. The mere mention of their names filled him with emotion. "We are the priests of the poor," he would say to his missionaries, "God chose us for their sake." When addressing his community, he would often speak on this same subject. Is it true that I love the poor, and that I am sensible to their sufferings?

2d Point. *Zeal of St. Vincent de Paul for the salvation of the poor.* Three considerations lead him to make himself their apostle. I. The great need they have of spiritual assistance. It was particularly in the interest of their souls that he founded so many associations. II. The eminent dignity of the poor considered in the light of faith. Does not the Savior declare that they are the special object of His mission amongst men? III. With the poor there is less danger for the priest and greater hope of success. Let us pray God to communicate to us the spirit of a saint who devoted himself so generously, and labored so efficaciously to the temporal relief and the eternal happiness of the poor.

CXXIII. MEDITATION.

JULY 25th—ST. JAMES THE GREATER.

This apostle holds the third rank among the twelve chosen by our Lord. He was the son of Zebedeus, and the elder brother of St. John the Evangelist. We call him the greater to distinguish him from St. James the lesser, son of Alpheus, and who was bishop of Jerusalem. It is thought that he was a native of Bethsida, a town of Galilee, as also St. Peter, and St. Andrew. He was a fisherman as they were. He was on many instances the recipient of great privileges, like his brother. Both induced their mother to ask Jesus Christ that they might occupy the two first places in His kingdom; and our Lord in return asked if they could share with Him the chalice of His passion. St. James very soon enjoyed this honor, for he was the first martyr amongst the apostles. He was beheaded at Jerusalem by order of King Herod Agrippa.

1st.—PREPARATION OF ST. JAMES FOR HIS APOSTOLIC MINISTRY.

2d.—HIS CONDUCT IN THE MINISTRY.

1st Point. *Preparation of St. James for the apostolic ministry.* It consisted in an undoubted vocation, prompt and generous fidelity, and a sincere attachment to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the ministry of an apostle, vocation is absolutely necessary. Whoever enters the ministry by his own volition, seeks only his views. He may have great talents, all the resources of an able mind . . . . if he is not called, he is destitute of the necessary qualification for an apostle. A man does not acquire his own virtues, how then can other people's virtues be the result of his labors? "*Neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth.*"—(I. Cor. iii: 7.) St. James was convinced of this truth. He had known the Savior for some time, and was quite anxious to be considered one of His adherents. He waited only for the invitation of "the Master." What will prophets do in Thy Church, O my God, unless they are delegated by Thee! They may re-

ceive the support and admiration of men. It is quite certain, however, that they will not bring about their conversion. They may gain a name for themselves, but they never will be the mediums of grace and salvation. They may captivate their minds, but will never win their hearts. They will gain glory for themselves, but not for Jesus Christ.

II. Fidelity of St. James to his vocation. Who can describe his joy on hearing the words : "*Come ye after Me, and I will make you to be fishers of men.*"—(Mat. iv : 19.) He does not hesitate, and immediately he sacrifices everything to purchase the happiness of living and dying with Jesus. This was a truly heroic sacrifice, when we consider its motive, its circumstances, and its extent. The value of a sacrifice does not depend so much on the victim as on the fervor and purity of the heart of him who offers it. The desires of St. James in devoting himself to the cause of Jesus Christ, far surpassed the value of his offering. If he had more he would willingly have yielded its possession to Christ. Moreover, according to the reflection of St. John Chrysostom, if he leaves but little, he finds less still. The grace of God induces him to give up not only his means of living ; but it offers him in exchange for them, nothing but contradictions, persecutions, and other sufferings. It separates him from a poor unknown father ; but his new Master is less known by the miracles He performs than by the contempt and hatred which the Scribes and Pharisees show for Him. He quits a life of labor, but also one exempt from trouble ; he begins a life more penitential, more austere, full of agitation and humiliation. As to extent, the sacrifice of St. James embraces not only all his possessions, but also all his desires and hopes ; his views and ambitions may have been empty and deceptive, they, however, filled his mind and pleased his imagination. He gives himself to Christ as willingly and entirely, as he gave up his boat and family. Henceforth, he shall live in Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ alone ; he shall have no other interests to promote but those of Jesus Christ. O priests of God, be you not deceived. Such is the spirit which should fill your minds. The grace which has called you to the evangelical ministry, urges upon you the practice of all virtues requisite for its proper fulfillment. You cannot accomplish this without renouncing all the inclinations of flesh and blood. Self abnegation is necessary to the Christian who wishes to follow Jesus Christ. How much more necessary to His minister who

ought to follow Him more closely, and induce others to walk in His steps. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me." Vocation to the priesthood is vocation to thousands of sacrifices; nothing but an ardent and generous love for Jesus Christ, can render them light.

III. Such was the special virtue of the apostle, St. James. An ardent love. We have an evidence of this, in the promptness wherewith he answers the Divine call: "*Come after Me.*" Hardly had he heard these words when there was born in his heart a heavenly fire which consumed all earthly ties. From that moment, whatever impairs the glory of his Master, is a wound to his heart. When Samaritans refused the entrance of their city to Him who was bringing to them the knowledge of salvation, James became indignant; it seemed to him that God ought to punish on the spot an insult offered to His son. "*Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?*"—(Luc. ix: 54.) Outbursts of this kind were contrary to the meek charity of the new law; and the Lord moderated them, though approving of the principle.

A generous love. "Jesus Christ asks him: Can you drink the chalice of reproaches and sufferings which I will drink?" James answers at once, "I can, I will accept it from Thy hands as Thou hast accepted it from the hands of Thy Father." His generosity deserved for him the favors of his Master. Jesus chooses James, with Peter and John, to be the depository of His secrets, the companion of His watchings and of His prayer, the witness of His most wonderful miracles. He loves him enough to manifest to him His glory on Mount Thabor, He knows him to love Him firmly enough to expose him to the sight of His apparent weakness in the garden of Olives. Let us congratulate this apostle for the excellent preparation he made for the ministry which the savior confided to him, and chide ourselves for imitating him so imperfectly.

2d Point. *How St. James exercised his sublime and Divine ministry.* Zeal for the sanctification of souls, good examples, courage in accepting all sufferings.

I. It was not in vain that Jesus Christ named him "Son of thunder."—(Marc. iii: 17.) The word of God in his mouth was full of force and efficacy. What wholesome terrors did not the report of this thun-

der create in guilty consciences? According to St. Chrysostom the first rage of the Jews would not have been kindled against him, if he had not been conspicuous amongst all the other apostles for his zeal. *Statim ab initio rerum tanto ordore concaluit, ut a persecutoribus occisus sit.* He contributed much to the progress of the Gospel, not in Judea alone, but amongst distant nations.[1]

Let us consider with attention the principal cause of this success. What virtue is there in sermons, even in miracles themselves when there is question of changing and converting hearts? Of all the wonders wrought by the apostles, certainly the miracle of their own virtues contributed the most to sanctify the world, and it was less by preaching than by doing good that they subjected nations to the law of the Gospel. We learn from St, Epiphanius, that James kept holy continence and led a most austere and mortified life. Imitating the virginal purity of his brother, he opened with him to chosen souls, the career of great struggles and of great victories, and drew thousands of men, after his example, to lead the life of angels in a frail body. "*Jacobus et Joannes in virginitate persistentes, certaminus illius gloriam summa cum admiratione reportarunt; secundum quos infinita hominum millia in mundo, in monasteriis, ejusdem certaminis decus adepta sunt.*"—(S. Epiph.)

III. To zeal and to sanctity of life, St. James united the determination to encounter and suffer everything to save souls. We can form some idea of the contradictions and troubles of all kinds he had to undergo, if we recollect that the greater part of his ministry was exercised among the Jews, the most blind, indocile and hardened of all nations. He crowned it by martyrdom, and drank the chalice of his Master, as he had promised. He alone, with St. James the lesser, had the privilege of shedding his blood in Jerusalem on the same soil which had received the blood of the Son of God. The death of Christ gave birth to the Church; that of St. James gave it a wonderful increase, as it was the occasion of the dispersion of the apostles, who went to preach the Gospel through the whole world. The Master, being about to expire, had prayed for His executioners; St. James, when about to die, converted his executioner also, by embracing him

Take your resolutions and go to the altar to drink this other chalice which Jesus Christ has prepared for you. It awakens in the good priest

1. According to the Bollandists, St. James carried the Gospel into Spain.

the fire of Divine love ; it takes all bitterness from sufferings, and how holy the delight it brings on to the soul ! "*My chalice, which inebriates, how goodly it is !*"—(Ps. xxii : 5.)

1st Point. *St. James' preparation for the apostolic ministry.* Lawful vocation ; prompt and unfaltering fidelity, sincere attachment to the person of Jesus Christ. As soon as he knew the Savior, he felt a most ardent desire to become one of his followers. . . . What a joy, when he heard the words : come after Me. He hesitated not an instant, he at once left his bark, his nets, his parents, everything was sacrificed. The extent of his offering was limited only by his capacity. . . . He left but little, but what he found was less still. . . . Not only did he give all that he had, but he sacrificed all that he was and also all his hopes. Self-abnegation is indispensable to the disciple of Jesus, and much more so to His minister. An ardent and generous love for Jesus Christ, together with an entire detachment from creatures, are two essential qualities of the apostolic man.

2d Point. *How St. James exercised the holy ministry.* He presents for our imitation the zeal which labors for the sanctification of souls, the good example which convinces them, the courage which accepts every suffering to save them. The word of God in the mouth of St. James was full of force. He was the first to incur the fury of the Jews, because he was the more conspicuous by his zeal. His preaching made the first impression, his example finished the work. Of all the miracles wrought by the apostles, that of their virtues contributed more than any other to the conversion of the world. St. James had also courage and patience to suffer everything to obtain the conversion of souls. Jesus Christ being about to expire, prayed for His executioners. St. James also a moment before his death, converted his executioner by embracing him.

CXXIV. MEDITATION.

JULY 31st.—ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA.

He was born in Spain, of a noble family. He spent the time of his youth at the court and in the army, and led there an honorable life, but neglected the work of his salvation. His conversion was brought about by the reading of a good book which fell into his hands in place of a novel for which he had asked. He gave himself to God with such perfection, that in a short time he rose to great sanctity. He had been a slave to human glory ; he made himself a slave to the glory of God. "*Thou art My servant. . . . for in thee will I glory.*"—(Is. xlix : 3.) If one had asked him the motive of his penances, of his tears, of his enterprises, since the time of his conversion to that of his death, he might have answered with the prophet Elias : "*With zeal I have been zealous for the Lord God of hosts.*"—(III Reg. xix : 10.)

1st.—HE SOUGHT THE GLORY OF GOD IN EVERYTHING.

2d.—HE SOUGHT NOTHING BUT THE GLORY OF GOD.

3d.—HE SOUGHT NOTHING BUT THE GREATEST GLORY OF GOD.

1st Point. *St. Ignatius sought in everything the glory of God.* An ancient author divided men into four classes : the men of heaven, the men of earth, the men of men, and the men of God. The first seeks the goods of eternity ; the second thirst after the false goods of earth ; the men of men are the slaves of human respect ; the men of God adhere to God, and ambition nothing save the happiness of pleasing Him. St. Ignatius distinguished himself in the ranks of the first and of the last. His heart was always, and his eyes were frequently turned up to heaven, and he would frequently say full of sadness : *Quam sordet tellus dum cœlum intueor !* As to his attachment to God, we read in the process of his canonization, that he referred to Him as to his last end, all his thoughts, all his words, all his actions, intending in

everything to honor Him. We may say that he endeavored to procure for God the glory, the most excellent in its nature, and the most universal in its extent.

I. We glorify God by knowing and loving Him, and we glorify Him in the most excellent manner when we do as St. Ignatius did, propagate His knowledge and His love. His first care was to glorify God by sanctifying himself. He went through all the degrees by which the soul rises to perfect sanctity. He began by being penitent. Stripped of his ordinary clothing, covered with a sack, having a cord about his loins, his heart bowed with sorrow, and already inflamed with the love of God, he spends an entire night in prayer before the altar of Mary, in order to give himself to the Son through the mother. From this moment he considered himself simply as one crucified to the world, and to whom the world was crucified. The grotto of Manreze, the hospitals, the public squares, witnessed the pious mortifications he practiced on his body, and the humiliations which he voluntarily endured. Well indeed did he atone for the offences he had offered to God during the time of his worldly life. All his passions were changed into virtues. His self-abnegation, his humility, his patience, charity for God, his love of God and of his brethren, were admirable. Consider his ardent desire of procuring the eternal happiness of souls. His courage, his zeal in the first labors of an apostolic life. His zeal is unbounded. He desires to go to Palestine, there to defend the interests of Jesus Christ among schismatics and infidels. After his return to Europe, he understands that he should have an education in order to be more useful for the interests of God. Nothing daunts him in his holy undertakings. Neither great distances, difficulties apparently unconquerable, the annoyance of returning at his age to the condition of a pupil, neither frozen lakes or anything else can relent or arrest the activity of his zeal. Thus he procured the glory of God in the most conspicuous manner. God received glory from Ignatius himself and from others who were influenced by the words and example of the saint ; and we may add that this glory was very universal.

II. We may apply to St. Ignatius this word of a prophet: "*He stood and measured the earth.*"—(Habac. iii: 6.) Ignatius saw the deplorable condition of religion in all parts of the world, and he undertook to remedy all the evils which he discovered. He extended his zeal

to all ages, all conditions, all peoples, all times. . . . Such is the vast field which he opened to the society of which he is the founder. God rewarded his wonderful confidence by blessings so abundant, that before his death he saw his disciples entering almost every nation, to spread amongst them the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and to kindle in all hearts the fire of His love. If St. Gregory is named the apostle of England, because he was the means of having the Gospel preached in that country, so does Ignatius deserve the same appellation, relatively to the immense countries of the East, since he sent to them Francis Xavier, in whose steps so many other evangelical laborers have walked since his days.

We admire a charity so admirable. Let us, however, consider that we also have been created to contribute to the glory of God as well as Ignatius was. The glory of God is the end of our creation just as it was the end of his. What have we done or suffered up to this day for God's glory? Are we more concerned about things of heaven than of this world? What do we seek? Have we a real zeal for the interests of the Lord? Do we glorify Him as much as we can, both by ourselves and through others? Should we not shed bitter tears, if we be forced to acknowledge that we have dishonored Him both by ourselves and through others?

2d Point. *St. Ignatius sought nothing but the glory of God.* A right intention has God for its end, the pure intention has no other end but God. St. Ignatius can say after his Master: "*But I seek not my glory.*" With the aid of the light he received in meditation, he had in a short time acquired so perfect a knowledge of himself, that the temptation which he least feared was, as he avowed it, the temptation of self-love. This man who had been so anxious and sensitive in matters of human honor, was eager for humiliations and contempt. He could not bear any marks of esteem for himself, neither would he allow his company to be praised in his presence. One of his ordinary aspirations was the following: "*O Lord, what do I will, or what can I will apart from Thee?*" Nothing, however, shows so well his disinterested love as what he said once to one of his disciples: "Were the choice given to me of being immediately put in possession of heaven, or of remaining on earth uncertain of my salvation, but certain of contributing some glory to God, I would, without hesitation, take the last

alternative." He added: "The loss which I would incur by this choice would be as much below the gain, as the interests of men are below the interests of God." He saw God alone, had no thought except for Him. Hell itself had no terror for him, save that there they hear God's name continually blasphemed. Alas, how few priests there are so entirely detached from creatures, and who could exclaim in all truth: *God alone! God alone!* Where are they who could say: God alone suffices me; I am satisfied in having Him the witness of my intentions and of my works; I seek, I love Him alone; for Him only do I work, neither do I have any desire save to procure His glory? "*Rarus profecto reperitur, qui solo testimonio contentus sit divino. Hoc probatissimorum virorum est proprium, qui in luce veritatis introrsus gradientes, Deo tantum placere concupiscunt.*"—(St. Laur. Just., de Comp. Christ. perfec. c: 19.)

3d Point. *St. Ignatius sought nothing but the greatest glory of God.* This was his motto. They find it on each page of his constitutions; it was continually on his lips; his whole life gave it expression. Had he proposed to himself the glory of God or even His very great glory only, he would have set bounds to his zeal, since in this case it would have remained possible to desire or to procure for God something more; but he extended his glory to infinity in seeking His greatest glory wholly and in everything.

Calmness and peace of mind amid many accidents which disturb other men, is a sure mark that we live for God alone, and for His greatest glory. St. Ignatius was so united with God, so firmly fixed, so to say, in God's immutability, that the most unforseen or vexatious events could not altar the serenity of his soul. St. Philip Nery was wont to say in seeing him: "*Behold a man who has the face of a denizen of heaven.*" He tenderly loved his society which he saw successfully engaged in extending the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and of all trials, its destruction would have been the one most trying to his heart, and yet he declared, that should the greatest glory of God have demanded this sacrifice, he would make it willingly, and that one-quarter of an hour meditation would suffice to overcome the emotion caused by so painful a blow.

Let us pray to God to give us some idea of His glory, we will then love it. We will devote ourselves to its promotion, according to the de-

gree of our knowledge of its excellence. We will seek it in everything, we will seek nothing else ; and as God does everything for our greatest good, so we shall do and suffer everything for His greatest glory.

1st Point. *St. Ignatius sought the glory of God in everything.* His heart was always, and his eyes were often raised up to heaven. I. He glorified God in the most excellent manner ; for he was not satisfied with knowing and loving him, he devoted himself entirely to make Him known and loved by others. He considered himself, since the time of his conversion, as one crucified to the world, and to whom the world was crucified. As soon as he had entered the way of perfection he endeavored to have others follow the same. II. He glorified God in a most universal manner. His zeal extended to all ages, all conditions all people, all times ; for he opened his vast field of labor to the society of which he was the founder. The glory of God is our object as it was his. What have we done and what have we suffered to procure this glory ?

2d Point. *St. Ignatius sought the glory of God only.* He might well say with his adorable Master : *I seek not my glory.* He confessed that self-love was, of all temptations, the one he apprehended the least. He loved God alone and had no thought save for Him. And now, what do I do ? Would I dare say that Thou art sufficient to me ? that I seek nothing apart from Thee ?

3d Point. *St. Ignatius sought nothing but the greatest glory of God.* This was his motto. He had it always on his lips ; it was the expression of his whole life. Hence came that peace and tranquility of soul which he preserved in the midst of the most unforseen events. Nothing could alter the serenity of his countenance. Grant that I may know Thee, O my God, I will always seek Thy glory, Thy greatest glory, and this alone.

CXXV. MEDITATION.

AUGUST 6TH—THE TRANSFIGURATION—CONTEMPLATION.

1st.—CONTEMPLATE THE PERSONS CONCERNED.

2d.—HEAR THEIR WORDS.

3d.—CONSIDER THEIR ACTIONS.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Our Lord, six days after that on which He had foretold the glory of His last coming, took with Him Peter, James and John, and led them apart on to a high mountain, and was transfigured before them. And behold, two men appeared conversing with Him, Moses and Elias. . . . Peter said to Jesus : "*Lord, it is good for us to be here, if Thou wilt, let us build here three tabernacles, one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias.*" He was still speaking when a miraculous cloud enfolded them, and a voice came out of the cloud saying : "*This is My well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear you Him!*"—(Mat. xvii.)

SECOND PRELUDE.—Represent to yourself a high mountain, and on its summit Jesus with His three disciples.

THIRD PRELUDE—O Jesus, the most beautiful of the sons of men, gladden my soul with one of the rays of Thy glory, grant me the grace to know Thee; nothing will then separate me from Thee; and from Mount Thabor I will follow Thee to Mount Calvary !

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons mentioned.* Jesus Christ, always anxious to strengthen the faith of His apostles, and educating in their persons all the pastors of His Church in the virtues which their vocation requires, showing Himself to them with His face resplendent as the sun and His garment white as snow. . . . Blessed, O Lord, are the eyes which saw Thee and will see Thee in Thy glory—Peter, James and John, the only chosen witnesses of the transfiguration. Extraordinary favors are the lot of a few privileged souls only. Let us congratulate these three apostles, and ask through their intercession to

be filled with reverence for the supernatural majesty of the Son of God. It was proper that they who were to be eye-witnesses of His humiliations in the garden of Olives could contemplate Him, at least a moment, in the splendor of His Glory. Great graces prepare us for great trials.—Moses and Elias conversing with Jesus about the death of the Savior at Jerusalem. Moses is the type of the meekness and patience necessary to every director of souls. "*Moses was a man exceeding meek, above all men that dwelt upon the earth.*"—(Num. xii : 3.) "*Carry them in Thy bosom as the nurse is wont to carry the little infant.*"—(Ib. xi : 12.) Elias is the type of charity, active and ardent. "*Elias the prophet stood up as a fire, and his word burnt like a torch.*"—(Eccle. xlviii : 1.) Here we have an emblem of zeal; but its principle we shall find in the meditation of the passion and sufferings of Jesus. We learn to love souls and to devote ourselves to their salvation, when we go in spirit to Calvary, and there meditate on the love which God has for them; and he who loves is patient. . . . *Charity is patient.* . . . *it suffers all things.*

2d and 3d Points. *Hear the words, consider the actions.* What is the subject of conversation on that mountain, compassed around with the splendor of the Son of God? They speak of the cruel and ignominious death by which He is to accomplish the will of His Father and the salvation of men, and realize the figures of the law and the oracles of the prophets. Was this, O Lord, a subject pleasing to Thee at a time that Thou wert displaying Thy glory? To speak, however, of Thy death, was to speak of Thy love for man; this is but rarely the matter of my conversation with Thee. Why am not I entirely occupied, penetrated, inflamed with this thought of Thy death, nay, not even at Thy altar, when I offer the sacrifice which places it anew before my eyes? *O memoriale mortis Domini!* . . . O my God, in Thy sufferings, in Thy death, in the excess of Thy love, Thou certainly dost deserve all my love. I should blush to show any ingratitude.

When our Lord arrived on Mount Thabor He began to pray, and so did the three apostles with Him. Soon, however, they were overcome with fatigue, and fell asleep, so that they saw not the beginning of the transfiguration, and lost a part of that ravishing spectacle. . . . . How many graces and lights do we not lose through this torpor of tepidity? . . . Aroused from their slumbers, they behold the

majesty of their Divine Master. Peter, beside himself with admiration, exclaims: "*Lord it is good for us to be here, let us build here three tabernacles!*" Astonished as he was, he uttered the thought uppermost in his mind. The man of faith considers not the world as a place of joy and repose. When God grants us here some passing consolation, it is to encourage us to labor and to suffer. Are not there, however, many priests who would wish always to live in an easy condition of life, forgetful of what they owe religion and their brethren? What loss, what calamity for the world, if the apostles had always remained in the joys of Mt. Thabor.

Peter had hardly uttered his request, when a new sight presented itself to the three disciples. A bright cloud surrounds the mountain, covers them as would a beautiful pavilion, and at the same time a heavenly voice issues from the cloud: *This is My well-beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased. Hear you Him!* Behold then the precept which God gives to mankind: He gave us His own beloved Son to instruct us. It would have seemed almost unnecessary to recommend the teaching of Jesus to our minds and hearts. The apostles, terrified, fall with their faces upon the ground. The Lord, however, drew near to them, touched them gently and said: "Arise, fear not!" The apostles, reassured by these words, arise, and looking round about them they saw no one but Jesus alone. To a soul admitted to intimate communings with her God, everything is transfigured, everything has a different aspect. Blessed is the priest who, being taught in meditation by the light of eternal truth, sees nothing but Jesus, considers naught but Jesus in his fellow-beings, has no desire but to lead others to Him and to obtain His approbation for himself.

In closing your meditation, you might make different colloquies, successively with our Lord and the witnesses. Admire His splendor, rejoice with Jesus on account of His glory; promise that you will be more attentive, respectful and docile to His word. Pray to Elias and Moses to obtain for you their zeal and their meekness; request the holy apostles to impart to you an increase of faith, hope and charity, which they received on this occasion, so that from Thabor you may follow Jesus to Calvary. Accept through love for Him the troubles of this day, and when the time of great sufferings will arrive, strengthen your heart with these words of St. Paul: "*We look for the Savior, our Lord*

Jesus Christ, who will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the body of His glory."—(Phi. iii : 21.)

1st Point. *Contemplate the persons concerned.* Jesus Christ ; behold Him on the mountain. . . . Examine why only Peter, James and John were present. Why these three were chosen in preference to the others. Contemplate Moses and Elias conversing with Jesus. Moses is the figure of patience. Elias is the emblem of zeal. Both virtues are obtained by meditating on the passion of Jesus Christ.

2d and 3d Points. *Hear the words and consider the actions of the persons mentioned.* Examine the theme of their conversation. O Jesus, no conversation pleases Thee as much as that which relates to Thy passion and death. It was during prayer that the Savior was transfigured. Reflect on the ecstasy of St. Peter asking to stay on Thabor. For the man of faith, earth is not the place of joy and rest. Consider the luminous cloud encompassing the mountain ; the voice from heaven proclaiming Jesus the well-beloved Son of God, and commanding the listeners to hear Him. Consider the terror of the apostles ; their good Master bids them not to fear. Colloquy with our Lord, and with the witnesses of His transfiguration.

CXXVI. MEDITATION.

AUGUST 7th—ST. GAETAN FOUNDER OF THE REGULAR CLERKS—THEATINES.—"*I will raise me up a faithful priest, who shall do according to my heart and my soul.*"—(I. Kings ii : 34.)

St. Gaetan was the faithful priest sent by heaven to raise and sustain the dignity of the priesthood. The order which he founded had for its object the renewal in the clergy the apostolic life of the early days, and to silence the tongues of heretics ever ready to parade the loss of zeal amongst the clergy in their attacks against the Church.

The vow of poverty taken by their religions was so strict that they could never lay claim to any salary, nor even ask for alms. They lived on the charity of the faithful. By the example of his virtues and the labors of his zeal, Gaetan edified successively Vicence, where he was born, Venice, Naples, and Rome. He was in this latter city when it was captured and pillaged by the constable de Bourbon of France. In him they saw the perfect priest, the man loyal to the cause of God and the salvation of souls, and entirely emancipated from all worldly attachments. To his society he bequeathed as an inheritance three traits of the sacerdotal spirit :—

1st.—A DEEPLY RELIGIOUS SPIRIT.

2d.—CHARITY FOR HIS FELLOW-BEINGS.

3d.—PERFECT CONFIDENCE IN PROVIDENCE.

1st Point. *St. Gaetan's deeply religious spirit.* Grace had deposited early in his soul the germ of that profound respect for the Divinity which continued to develop as time went on. The idea he had in his youth concerning the adorable High Priest of the new law, was so exalted, that the mere thought of the priesthood excited in him a thrill of joy mingled with terror. We can imagine his disposition when he was about to receive the imposition of hands, and his sentiments when he offered the holy sacrifice. Here are some of his words which we find in one of his letters to a pious person : "Vile dust that I am, I carry the most High under frail appearances ! I have Him before my eyes, and my eyes do not melt into tears ! I have Him in my heart and my heart is not on fire !"

During all his life he kept constantly before him this presence of God in all his functions. It produced on him a well-sustained attention ; a modest and serious appearance, and inspired all those who beheld him with the profoundest respect. Hence, also, was noticeable an ardent desire to see the temples of the Lord always kept in a condition suitable to their purpose. He always desired to see all pomp and magnificence displayed in churches. He required that nothing should be amiss in the singing, the ceremonies and all the exterior ceremonial which enhances the beauty of Divine worship, and speaks to the heart whilst

affecting the senses; he would have wished that each of his brethren could say with the prophet King: "*The zeal of Thy house has eaten me up.*"—(Ps. lxviii : 10.) "*O Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house and the place where Thy glory dwelleth.*"—(Ps. xxv : 8.)

I, too, for some time, O my God, used to love the beauty of Thy house and the place where Thou deignest to live in the midst of Thy people. The first times that I celebrated this sacrifice, justly named the miracle of our mysteries, and distributed to men the bread of angels, I was all impressed with the dignity of this ministry so Divine. I felt, as it were, crushed under the weight of Thy holy majesty. I was seized with emotion at the contemplation of the blessings of Thy infinite goodness. Alas, what has become of that vivid faith? Is it not the same victim which I now immolate, the same living bread which I eat, the same chalice of salvation that I drink; are they not the same ineffable perfections which I adore? . . . If by a happy exception my tepidity and the darkness it spreads around me, does not yet extend as far as the Mass, how is it with regard to the other duties? Would I be justified in saying that I perform them all in a manner worthy of God, with the recollection, reverence and interior devotion which I owe Him?

2d Point. *St. Gaetan was a model of charity to the people.* This virtue in a good priest should combine the most ardent zeal for the salvation of men, with the most compassionate kindness for the comfort and relief of the unfortunate.

I. To appreciate the zeal of St. Gaetan for the sanctification of souls, we should remember the deplorable condition of the Church in his days. With as great reality as Jeremias, he saw with his eyes the gold of the temple obscured, the stones of the sanctuary scattered, and scandals without number. He did more than to weep over evils which demanded more effective remedies. His zeal was that of an apostle, active, firm, patient.

His zeal was active. He began at once without losing a moment. He preaches the Word of God, directs consciences, enters into polemics in which error was confuted. He multiplies himself through the laborers whom he induces to share his toils, and excites with the zeal which burns in his own heart.

His zeal was firm and intrepid. Neither the power of the great, the boldness of the libertine, nor the hatred of heretics, can trammel

his enterprises for the salvation of souls. His zeal, patient and unconquerable, sustained him amidst vigils and hardships, against insults, outrages and acts of violence. Reflect on how much he suffered when the city of Rome was captured and pillaged; he was seen rushing between the living and the dead, rousing the drooping spirits of the faithful teaching them to die as Christians, and turn their misfortunes to advantage. It was at this time that he was arrested in the very house of God, maltreated, manacled like a criminal, and cast into a dungeon.

What would a lukewarm priest have done? Would he not have found some pretext for escaping from danger, or to spare himself some of those hardships which opened heaven to so many souls? St. Gaetan was the imitator of St. Paul. *Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?* Can I see them suffer, and not feel their sufferings myself? "*Who is weak and I am not weak?*"—(II Cor. xi.) His charity extends to temporal as well as to spiritual miseries.

II. Italy was at this time full of indigent and sick people, of orphans and of prisoners. Nearly every calamity visited that country at that time. St. Gaetan beheld with sadness all those misfortunes, and was anxious to relieve them all. He went from house to house to collect alms, and divided the proceeds among the poor; he spent whole nights with the sick, bestowing on them every assistance, no matter how repulsive to nature. When to add to other misfortunes, there came a great famine, he gathered together the unfortunate victims of hunger, and distributed to them food. He deprived himself of food in order to give it to the poor. Venice was ravaged with pestilence, and its inhabitants fled from the city. Gaetan went and lived in the city; his companions followed his example. He did not fear the pestilence. Death would have been for him a gain. It was indeed a beautiful sight to contemplate that priest thinking only of God and of the welfare of his fellow-beings. This charity, however, always supposes a heart free from all worldly attachments and relying entirely on Providence.

3d Point. *His confidence in God.* Gaetan might have applied to himself the words of David: "*I am become to many as a wonder, but Thou art a strong helper.*"—(Ps. lxx: 7.) Many have considered me as a wonder, when they have considered the poverty which I have embraced.

This poverty has been condemned by many, as being contrary to

the rules of prudence; but Thou, O Lord, hast been my defender. One in fact knows not what to admire more, the perfection of his hope in God, or the manner in which God justified this confidence.

I. Avarice had on those days crept into the sanctuary, and on this account heresy had an easy triumph. Gaetan avenged the honor of the priesthood, by a disinterestedness hitherto unheard of. He gave up, not only all worldly possessions, but also every possible resource of revenue, save that sent by Providence. The other poor of Jesus Christ have nothing. However, they have the ability to ask. Gaetan forbade himself even this means of assistance. He will beg for others, but never for himself nor for his disciples. Nay, of that which is offered to him he accepts only what is strictly necessary, putting the rigorous interpretation on the maxim of the Lord, "*Be not solicitous.*" A bishop came to his assistance. Gaetan, however, thought his alms too frequent and too generous; and even threatens to take nothing more from him unless he limit his contributions. What then is the fund on which he is willing to depend? It is Thyself, O my God, Thyself alone. He relies on Thy Providence, of which he knows the wisdom, the tenderness and power, He knows that Thou seest all our wants: "*Your Father knows that you have need of all these things.*"—(Mat. vi: 32.) He knows that Thou art willing to assist us because Thou lovest us. "*The Father Himself, He loves you.*"—(J. xvi: 27.) That thou canst do so in any emergency, for Thy wisdom "*Reaches from end to end mightily.*"—(Wis. viii: 1.) Such is the fund that he must have, but with it he can easily do without anything else.

II. His confidence was always admirably justified. Being once exposed to imminent danger on the Tiber, Providence delivered him in a manner almost miraculous. In the midst of those infected with the plague, he saw death continually under his eyes; but Providence preserved his life. He needed a sum of money in a case of great distress; Providence sent to him an unknown person who placed it in his hands. He desired to have some companions; and men quite commendable, chosen by Providence, joined him in his labors. He desired to found an order; and this order, notwithstanding difficulties, humanly speaking, insurmountable, was soon founded and flourished throughout all Italy, whence it spread amongst other nations.

Let us rely upon God for everything that concerns us. We shall

never hope in vain. Let us profit by the example of St. Gaetan and the recommendation of St. Peter. Since God is willing to assume all our solicitudes, let us cast them into His paternal bosom, and let us never entertain any other, save that of expressing our love through our zeal to promote His glory and the welfare of souls. "*Casting all your solicitude in Him, for He has care of you.*"—(I. Pet. v : 7.)

1st Point. *St. Gaetan's deep religious feeling.* In his youth, the mere thought of the priesthood caused him to experience a thrill of joy united with terror. He wrote as follows, after becoming a priest : "I am a vile dust, carrying the Almighty under frail appearances ; I have Him before my eyes and my eyes do not melt with tears !" To all those who beheld him, he inspired a profound respect for everything belonging to Divine worship. He would have wished that every member of the order which he had founded would be justified in saying to himself : "The zeal of Thy house has eaten me up."—"Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house." There was a time, alas, when I, O Lord, loved the beauty of Thy house ! Alas ! what has become of those days of fervor and living faith ?

2d Point. *St. Gaetan a model of charity to the people.* His zeal was ardent, firm, kind, patient. He preached, guided souls in the ways of God, multiplied himself through the laborers whom he secured. He did more than to shed tears over evils which needed more radical remedies. His charity extended to temporal miseries. He went about, obtained assistance, and divided the contributions among the poor. He devoted himself to the care of those infected with the plague.

3d Point. *St. Gaetan a model of detachment and of confidence in the hands of Providence.* We know not which to admire more, the perfection of his confidence in God, or the care of Providence in justifying the faith of His servant. He gave up, not only all kinds of possessions, but even every human assistance which is not brought about by Providence ; to himself he forbade the right to beg, save from the heavenly Father alone. Providence ever came to his help in every emergency, in every want.

CXXVII. MEDITATION.

AUGUST 15th.—ASSUMPTION OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN.

Three joyous and admirable mysteries of Mary, accomplished at about the same time, are the object of this solemnity, the greatest of those which the Church celebrates in her honor; these are her death, her anticipated resurrection, and her triumphant entrance into the eternal kingdom. One cannot love the blessed virgin without feeling joy at her happiness; and, therefore, all her devoted servants on this day love to contemplate her glory; for on this day she is crowned and proclaimed queen of angels and of men. If, however, we consult the desires of Mary, which are ever conformable to our true interests, we will pay less attention to the glory that she enjoys than to her sanctity, which was its principle and measure. Our duty is to imitate her as far as it lies in our power.

1st.—TO HER SANCTITY ALONE MARY OWES THE GLORY OF HER DEATH, OF HER RESURRECTION, AND OF HER ASSUMPTION.

2d.—MARY IS EXALTED IN GLORY ABOVE ALL THE SAINTS, BECAUSE SHE SURPASSES THEM ALL IN HOLINESS.

1st Point. *Mary is glorified in her death, resurrection and assumption in consequence of her sanctity only.* In order to be crowned one has to fight manfully.—(II Tim. ii: 5.) She who was the most privileged amongst all creatures, was not dispensed from that law. She triumphs because she has conquered; she receives glory because she has deserved it; her happiness is the result of her sanctity, as her sanctity is the result of her works. Let us apply to Mary, who is pre-eminently the valiant woman, the following oracle of wisdom: "*Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.*"—(Prov. xxxi: 31.) When will I realize, O my God, that not Thy favors, but my good deeds will entitle me to Thy rewards? Is it the immacu-

late conception of Thy mother, her Divine maternity, or the whole of her privileges which Thou crownest on this day? No; if such were the case, it might lead me to despair. Thy great favors lay upon us great obligations, and terrible subjects of accusations if we do not turn them to profit. That which thou rewardest in Mary is her profound humility in her elevation, her unalterable patience amid the most painful trials, her piety, her charity—in a word, all the virtues which she practiced with so great perfection.

The good servant of the Gospel does not simply say to his master: "*Thou hast given me five talents.*" In this there is no merit. He adds that he has multiplied them by his industry: "*Behold other five I have gained over and above.*" He does not present any other claim to a reward, neither does his master reward anything but his fidelities. "*Because . . . . thou hast been faithful, enter into the joy of thy master.*" The same should be said of the incomparable virgin. Not on account of the prerogatives which she holds from God, were her death so sweet, and her assumption so glorious, but on account of her sanctity, which, by the aid of grace, she acquired by good works. St. Augustine affirms that if she had not conceived the Son of God in her heart, in a manner more holy than she conceived Him in her womb, the Divine maternity would have been for her only a useless though specious title: *Materna enim propinquitas nihil ei profuiset, nisi felicius ipsum fide, quam carne gestasset.*

What should be the inference? "*Wherefore, brethren, labor the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election.*" —(II Pet. i: 10.) Since this the Divine plan, *wherefore*, since the creature the most beloved of heaven has had no other way but holiness to reach sovereign happiness, which is promised to us as it was to her, we must labor to sanctify our souls with a zeal even more ardent and generous. *Labor the more.* What a subject of comfort to know that it is in our power to *make sure our election;* that the same is not annexed to extraordinary favors, but to the virtues of our state, and to the good works which our vocation places at our command at every moment. *By good works.* If we do our part, this consideration will be for us at the moment of death an inexhaustable source of hope and consolation.

2d Point. *Mary is exalted in glory above all the saints, because she surpasses them all in holiness.* Since Almighty God, according to the

rules of His justice, rewards in His mother only the sancity of her works, it is just that the reward should correspond precisely with her sanctity. If, therefore, no holiness, apart from God Himself, equals the holiness of Mary, we must believe with St. Bernard and the whole Church, that the glory of Mary is more excellent than that of all created beings: *Super omnem exaltata creaturam.* Never did any pure creature receive graces so abundant and so excellent; neither did she ever receive any that was not increased by her most perfect co-operation. A plentitude of glory was to correspond to a plentitude of holiness: "*Quantum enim gratiæ in terris adepta est præ cæteris, tantum et in cœlis obtinet gloriæ singularis.*"—(St. Bern.) Therefore, the same saint exclaims in his admiration: *Christi generationem et Mariæ assumptionem quis enarrabit?* Mary is borne to the highest place in heaven, because she practiced the greatest humility on earth. She enjoys in Paradise the most ineffable delights of everlasting beatitude, because she supremely despises the false pleasures of the world. Her joys in heaven equal and surpass her sorrows in this world. We will receive the same treatment. "*He that sows in blessings shall also reap in blessings.*"—(II. Cor. ix: 6.) The victories I will gain over my passions in this world, will be fully compensated by my rewards in heaven. The mortifications endured will be offset by as many heavenly prizes. It is certain that God will act most generously with us, and will never allow Himself to be outdone in generosity. He will multiply His graces and shower them upon us, "*And He will multiply your seed, and increase the growth of the fruits of your justice.*"—(Ib.)

It can now be understood how Mary could be the mother of God and at the same time be overwhelmed with a sea of sorrows; how all her trials, even the most poignant and the most heartrending, met with no opposition, even from Christ, who allowed her life to be a continual martyrdom. The consolations which were to follow Mary's death compensated for all the sorrows of her life; and her glorious assumption into heaven set the seal of triumph on all her trials and troubles. Through pure love for His mother, and with an honorable desire to add to the treasure of her merits, Christ seemed almost indifferent to Mary's request at the wedding of Cana, seemed distant with her in the temple and at the very foot of the cross. Alas, I complain when He treats me as He treated His mother! O most faithful virgin, enable me to follow

thee in a path which led to such a happy ending! I will practice humility, I will suffer and sanctify myself by mortification and patience! But help me, my queen, my mother. Obtain for me the grace that I may always remember that my annoyance of to-day will be my joy of to-morrow, and that the sorrows of time prepare the delights of eternity.

1st Point. *Mary owes the glory accompanying her death, resurrection and assumption, to her sanctity.* There is no crown without a cross. This is the general law. It must not, however, be inferred that any acts of ours deserve the rewards of Almighty God. The good servant mentioned in the Gospel does not simply say to his master that he had received from him five talents, but that he had gained other five talents. Cannot the same be applied to the virgin mother of Christ. What should be the inference? Our duty is to make our vocation and our selection to glory secure by our good deeds in this life.

2d Point. *Mary is raised in glory above all the other saints simply because she surpassed them all in sanctity.* Eternal glory is bestowed upon merit; and glory and merit always hold a perfect proportion. Her recompense in heaven is equal to her trials in this world. My recompense will also equal my sufferings in this world. O mother of God, most faithful virgin, enable me to follow thee on the sorrowful path which leads to Paradise. Obtain for me the grace that I may consider my pains here below a guarantee of happiness at the moment of my death.

CXXVIII. MEDITATION.

AUGUST 20TH.—ST. BERNARD.

This saint, destined to restore the monastical spirit, and to be the ornament and support of the Church, was born in the year 1091, in the village of Fontaines near Dijon, of a noble and virtuous family. At the age of 22, terrified by the dangers of the world, he withdrew to Citeaux, whither his exhortations and example drew his five brothers, their uncle, and thirty others of his friends and relatives. Later on his father

himself followed him, and became the disciple of his son. All of them were received with great joy by the pious abbot Stephen and his religious. Bernard was soon obliged to leave this holy house to found the monastery of Clairveaux, whence sprang numerous colonies, and he saw even in his day as many as one hundred and sixty monasteries under his guidance. This, however, was only a part of his occupations. After labors almost incredible for the defense of the Church, which he edified by his virtues, enlightened by his doctrine, and instructed by his miracles, he died on the 20th of August, 1153, at the age of sixty-three. His life offers contrasts full of instruction for the pastors of souls. Here are three of them on which we will meditate :—

1st.—HIS AUSTERE PENANCE UNITED TO HIS INNOCENCE.

2d.—HIS INTERIOR LIFE AMID EXTERIOR OCCUPATIONS.

3d.—HIS SELF-CONTEMPT AMID THE APPLAUSE OF THE WORLD.

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1st Point. *St. Bernard united austere penance to perfect innocence.* He had received at his birth this purity of soul and natural candor which always indicate future piety. His parents took great care to educate him in virtue, and their example was for him a continual lesson. No one perhaps, however, was more exposed than he to the allurements of youth, owing to his gifts of body and mind. Young men are strongly tempted to abuse their endowments. Providence, however, guarded the heart of Bernard, and he corresponded most nobly to the inspirations of grace. One day he, through inadvertence, allowed his eyes to behold a dangerous object; immediately he threw himself into a frozen pond, in which he stayed a long time, to punish, what appeared to him, an unpardonable weakness. His conscience could not bear a moment the weight of the slightest fault. Jesus and Mary rewarded this love of purity by favoring him with frequent visits, and granting a special gift of meditation. His communings with God were hardly ever interrupted. Such was in the world the life of St. Bernard; what then has he to expiate in leaving it through the vigorous penance which he adopted and practiced to the end of his life.

Having a frail body and a delicate health, he finds no austerities which can satisfy his love of mortification. Exhausting fasts, vigils and infirmities, cannot limit his devotion. That which the flesh loses the spirit gains. He always finds new motives to endure the same austerities, and to impose others greater on himself. A little water, some vegetables, or even leaves of trees, a very short sleep, this is all he concedes to nature, and this pious cruelty practiced against himself he carries everywhere with him; he is as mortified in the palaces of kings as in his own monastery.

The saints are, in the exercise of penance, animated by motives which we seldom and very insufficiently consider. The less guilty they are, the greater sinners they believe themselves to be; the more pure their soul is, the more defects do they discover even in their most perfect actions. Their zeal for the glory of God convinces them that the least offences against His majesty are deserving of the most severe expiations. When the past troubles them not, they tremble for the future. To them it seems wiser rather to prevent the commission of sin than to weep over sin already committed. They, moreover, have too great a love for Jesus Christ to consent to remain without sufferings when they think of the God-man who suffered so much for their sake. They wish it were in their power to say: "*With Christ I am nailed to the cross.*"—(Gal. ii: 19.) For this reason it is, that the Church honors as penitents all those whom it honors as saints. The spirit of God has no diverse ways in this matter. But in apostolic men, zeal for the salvation of the neighbor is the motive which induces them to love sufferings and mortification, since Jesus Christ redeemed mankind by the sacrifice of the cross. We can not better prepare ourselves to apply to them the merits of salvation, than by imitating, as far as we can, the penance of Jesus on the cross. The better way to convert souls is to appease the anger of God in their behalf.

2d Point. *Interior life of St. Bernard joined to a life of exterior labors.* "I am," he exclaimed, "the chimera of my age, a solitary without solitude, taken up with all the affairs of the world, though I left the world in order to think of God alone." Certain it is that he had a part in all the events of his age, or rather that he was the soul of them. If we follow him in cities, in courts, or in councils, three times crossing and re-crossing the Alps, going over the whole of France, penetrating

the most distant parts of Germany, we find him intrusted with the most intricate negotiations, and matters of the most delicate nature, having to strive now against schism, now against heresy and always against the most intractable passions. But in the midst of this exterior agitation he is ever calm, ever united to God through the accomplishment of His will. "*The things that are pleasing to Him I do always.*" He complains, he laments whenever he has to leave his monastery. *Itane, bone Jesu, tota deficit in dolore vita mea? Tristis est anima mea usquedum redeam.* He leaves it, however, but does not interrupt the intimacy of his communications with God. A historian of his life said of him, that Bernard, not being able to carry his cell with him, always carried along his recollection and interior solitude: *Ubique solus erat.* Like unto the angels, who, in their divers employments, ever contemplate the face of God, St. Bernard, all taken up with the affairs of the world, remains always separated from the world, and opens his heart to God alone.

Such is the true spirit of the apostle of Jesus Christ. It is not the activity of Martha, nor the contemplation of Mary, it is the co-existence and union of both. St. Bernard knew how to treat exteriorly with his neighbor in the interests of God, so as to make Him reign over the hearts of men. He knew also how to remain interiorly united to God, in the interest of his fellow-creatures, in order to labor successfully for their sanctification and salvation. In all this, pastors of souls should strive to imitate him. They should also imitate his profound humility.

3d Point. *St. Bernard's self-contempt in the midst of the universal admiration of others.* Who was ever more honored than he was? Kings go to him in his solitude; three Popes are guided by his counsels, and in a manner rely on him for the government of the Church in the most trying circumstances. He is everywhere looked upon as an angel descended from heaven, and hearkened to as if he were an oracle. The authority of his word and the respect which he inspires, decide all questions. He it was who wrote the canons of the councils of Pisa, of Troyes, of Etampes and Rheims. In Languedoc he triumphs over Henry the heresiarch, and in Guienne over William, whom he changes from a wolf into a lamb. He brings about the condemnation of Gilbert de la Porree and of Peter Abailard. . . . His burning eloquence and the miracles he wrought induce immense multitudes to follow him; in or-

der to see him, all work is suspended. At Spire and Constance, the bishops and the clergy are obliged to make a barrier of their bodies for him; at Frankfort an emperor bears him off on his shoulders in order to save him from the forwardness of the multitudes that press upon him.

Yet with actions and successes so admirable, his humility does but become more profound. He tries to obscure the halo of glory which surrounds him. When many large cities request that he be appointed their bishop, he earnestly entreats the holy father that he may forward him a brief, excluding him from any ecclesiastical dignity. When all voices proclaim him a saint worthy of canonization, he, in a manner, declares himself a reprobate because of his sins. While men lavish praises upon him, he begs that they pray for God's mercy on his soul. Let us hear him speak of himself: "*Volo vos mihi credere de me magis quam alteri, qui tantum videt in facie. . . . Dico vobis, ego qui de me loquor non ex conjectura, sed ex sententia: non sum talis qualis putor, vel dicor; quod quidem tam securus fateor, quam certus experior.*" —(Ep. 11.) "*Tam vilis et abjectus vir appearam, quatenus pudeat eos talem ita laudasse. Quis dabit mihi apud homines de vitiis digne humiliari, quantum de falsis dotibus me video indigne exaltari?*"—(Ib.) What a lesson for those who, having so many reasons to humble themselves, seek only to be exalted.

In preparing for the holy sacrifice, and while going up to the altar, offer to God the dispositions of St. Bernard, and bear in mind what he says of the heavenly bread as a remedy for the infirmities of the soul: *Si quis vestrum non tam sæpe modo, non tam acerbos sentit iracundiæ motus invidiæ luxuriæ aut cæterorum hujusmodi, gratias agat corpori et sanguini Domini, quoniam virtus sacramenti operatur in eo; et gaudeat quod pessimum ulcus accedat ad sanitatem.*

1st Point. *St. Bernard's austere penance united to innocence.* His youth was spent in innocence and purity, and yet he left the world, entered the religious state and there practiced untold of mortifications. The less guilty the saints are, the greater sinners they think themselves to be. If the past does not alarm them, the thought of the future makes them tremble. The knowledge they have of their weakness, and their

zeal for the glory of God, are the motives of their ardent love of penance. They remember the God-man who suffered so much for them, and they cannot consent to be without sufferings.

2d Point. *Interior life of St. Bernard, in the midst of incessant exterior occupations.* He took part in all the events of his age. He was intrusted with the most intricate negotiations, had to contend with error and all kinds of passions. . . . Yet he was always calm, ever united to God by the accomplishment of His holy will. How blessed, O Lord, is that soul which knows how to unite the activity of Martha with the contemplation of Mary!

3d Point. *Humble life of St. Bernard amidst marks of universal esteem.* Kings court his friendship, Popes are guided by his counsels, the people heap upon him extraordinary honors; he performs great miracles. . . . With successes so wonderful he only becomes more humble. He despises himself, hides himself, tries to be unknown and forgotten among men. What a lesson for those who having so many reasons to humble themselves, admire themselves instead, and seek to be noticed and admired by their fellow-creatures.

CXXIX. MEDITATION.

AUGUST TWENTY-EIGHTH—ST. AUGUSTINE.

Augustine was born at Tagaste in Africa, on November 13th, 354, and gave even in early childhood, indications of the power of his mind; but led astray by passions, he gave himself up to a life of temporary licentiousness, and even became infected with the heresy of the Manicheans. His mother, Monica, shed so many tears for his conversion that God at last heard her prayers. The discourses of St. Ambrose had made a great impression on his mind. The reading of a passage of the Gospel, together with extraordinary graces, at last conquered his rebellious will. He at length gave himself up entirely to God, to the Church and the welfare of souls. Valerius, bishop of Hippo, ordained him priest, confided to him the ministry of the word of God, and having taken him for his coadjutor, made him participate in his pastoral

charge. St. Augustine had received from God the gift of a most powerful intellect; his learning was only surpassed by his charity, and it has been said of him that he was: *Pater Patrum, Doctor Doctorum, par angelis in fervore, par prophetis in absconditorum mysteriorum revelatione, par apostolis in prædicatione.*—(Possid.) He died during the siege of Hippo by the Vandals. The great event of his life was his conversion, which was a triumph of God's grace, and most beneficial to the Church. Hence we will consider,—

1st.—THE TRIUMPH OF GOD'S GRACE IN THE CONVERSION OF AUGUSTINE.

2d.—THE TRIUMPH OF THE CHURCH THROUGH HIS CONVERSION.

1st Point. *The triumph of grace in the conversion of Augustine.* The victory which grace won over the sinner, destined to become the father of so many saints, was so much the more glorious, as it was on the one hand more difficult, and on the other more complete.

I. Victory, difficult to be gained. Every thing in Augustine opposed the triumph of grace; his mind and heart, the obstinacy of heresy, and the tyranny of passions. When error has once captivated a man of superior mind and who has the consciousness of his superiority, many are the difficulties which stand in the way of Divine grace. Manicheism flattered the pride of Augustine, and he immediately posed as its zealous partisan. He soon renounced that heresy, it is true, but it was in order that he might capriciously go over from one sect and embrace another. Up to the time of his conversion, he had all the pride of a philosopher and the obstinacy of a heritic. Such in his mind were the obstacles which stood in the way of faith.

What now of the opposition of his heart to the purity of Christian morality? A slave to ambition, avarice, voluptuousness, all those evil passions held him bound in their baneful grasp, vied mutually, as it were, as he said himself, to gain mastery over him: "*Inhiabam honoribus, lucris, conjugio, et patiebar in eis cupiditatibus amarissimas difficultates. . . Certabant in meipso et de meipso, cujus potissimum esse viderer.*"—(Conf., l. vi, c. 6.)

How patiently did grace have to wait for him in his long neglect to correspond and co-operate with it! What power it had to display to

overcome his prolonged obduracy ! Licentiousness had grown within him so as to have become an imperious habit, and habit itself a sort of necessity ; *Suspirabam ligatus, non ferro alieno, sed ferrea mea voluntate.* At times, the beauty of virtue delighted him ; at others, he felt oppressed by the weight of his chains. He willed and willed not ; he prayed, and was afraid to be heard. "Soon, O Lord," he would sometimes exclaim, "a little while yet and I will be Thine ;" but that *soon* never came, and that short *while* was everlasting : "*Modo, ecce modo, sine paululum ; sed modo et modo non habebat modum, et sine paululum ibat in longum.*" The blessed moment comes at last ; grace overcomes him as it did Saul on the way to Damascus, and, according to the expression of Saint Zeno of Verona, *with one blow* the old man is destroyed and the new man created : *Uno ictu interficit veterem hominem, creat novum.*

II. The victory was complete. In the midst of his mental agitation he hears a voice which says to him : "*Tolle et lege.*" He obeys, and suddenly he receives extraordinary inspirations which engendered the first fruits of grace ; a firm faith, unshaken confidence, thought of eternity, love of Scriptures. . . . His affections are changed as well as his thoughts. This man, hitherto addicted to shameful pleasures, is now chaste, heavenly, filled with holy and sublime aspirations. "There rose up in my heart," he writes, "a great storm, which was followed by an abundant shower of tears. As solitude struck me as the fittest abode for the wailings of grief, I went and threw myself beneath the boughs of a fig tree, that there I might weep undisturbed. I then turned to Thee, O my God, and I said : how long, O Lord, how long ? Ah, remember then no longer my iniquities !" What a sorrow for the past ! He will never forgive himself for having, during so long a time, offended a God whose goodness impresses him more deeply than does the fear of His justice.

He now embraces the interests of that adorable justice, and thinks of nothing else save self-chastisement. An austere life will repair his sensual life ; voluntary humiliations will atone for his pride. He had coveted the applause of men ; he now asks for naught but their contempt. Not only does he censure his own works, by retracting involuntary inexactitudes, but he composes a book upon which, as upon an

altar, as he says himself, he offers to God the sacrifice of his reputation. Was there ever seen such an example of humility? Augustine wears the robe of baptismal innocence, and he makes a public confession which was not required of public sinners; he makes it before the whole world, not by an action which lasts but a moment, but he consigns it to a book which shall last as long as the world itself. Throughout all ages and in all places, his vagaries and licentious youth will be known.

Ah, how well he will atone for his criminal habits and longings! The sacred fire of God's grace and love has changed the heart of flesh, and transformed it into a heavenly heart. When we read his soliloquies, his confessions, and his commentaries on the psalms, we find nothing but sentiments of admiration, expressions of gratitude, outpourings of the most ardent love. Writing about himself he says: "*Incredible est, quantum in me Deus excitaverit amoris incendium!*" In another passage he exclaims: "*Væ tempori quo te non amavi! Deus, vita mea, qui oblitum tui non es oblitus! Mens mea devota tibi, tui amore succensa, tibi spirans, tibi inhians, te solum videre desiderat.*"

Grant us to-day, O Lord, through the intercession of this great penitent, the grace which the most holy priests ask of Thee every day: *Converte nos, Deus, salutaris noster.*

2d Point. *Triumph of the Church through the conversion of St. Augustine.* This holy doctor tells us in the tenth book of his confessions, that as soon as he had yielded to the voice of grace, and that his eyes had been opened by it, he had desired to retire into solitude, there to weep over his errors till the end of his life, but that God had prevented him from so doing by revealing to him that He had other designs upon him: *Meditatus fueram fugam in solitudinem, sed prohibuisti me, et confirmasti me.* He had been an admirable conquest of grace; he was to be one of its most admirable instruments. The charity of Jesus Christ urges him; he feels the want of spreading the love of God whom he offended so much. Not satisfied with preaching the word of God to his people with indefatigable constancy, his zeal, like that of St. Paul, extends to all the churches of the world. Grace does through him what it had done for him; it subdues and takes possession of the minds and hearts of men.

Through his words as well as through his writings, Catholic truth triumphs over the blindness of pagans, the subtlety of philosophers, the

obstinacy of heretics. He wages war against the Arians, the Manicheans, the Donatists, the Priscillianists, the Pelagians, the Semipelagians and others, and so successfully that St. Jerome thus writes to him: "*Macte virtute, in orbe celebraris: Catholici te conditorem antiquæ rursum fidei venerantur atque suspiciunt; et, quod signum majoris gloriæ est, omnes hæretici detestantur.*"—(Ind. Ep. Aug. 195.) He is the soul of councils, the voice and organ of the whole Church, the master of the learned. Saint Fulgentius, Prosper, Leo, Gregory the Great, Bernard and Thomas thought it an honor to adopt him as their master. It seems that God had raised him up to confound not only the errors of his day, but likewise those of all ages to come.

Whilst subjecting men's minds to the true doctrine, he also subjected their hearts to the law of God. Never shall we be able to know the number of conversions brought about by the mere reading of his confessions. How many souls did not this precious book preserve or save from despair, by means of the confidence which it inspires. How many sinners have been encouraged to confess their sins in the secret of the sacrament of penance, seeing with what simplicity the great Augustine made a public avowal of his. How many have been sanctified in the religious orders which have adopted his spirit and his rule, and acknowledge him as their founder. But of all triumphs, the one most dear to the Church is the triumph which grace works in the persons of her ministers, by raising them up to the perfect virtues of their sublime vocation, since the sanctification of pastors exercises such an influence upon that of their flocks; but to this end Augustine concurred most efficaciously by becoming the model of all pastors.

Let us return thanks to God for what He did for this great saint, and through him, for the whole Church. Let us, after his example, return to God's grace what we owe it, by causing it to reign over us and over our brethren. Let us often say to God with Augustine: "*Agnosce quod tuum est: ignosce quod meum est.*" That which I have from Thee, O my God, is a countless number of invaluable blessings, and that which I see in me as coming from myself, is nothing but base ingratitude which makes me blush with shame, and for which I will never cease to beg Thy pardon and mercy. By my crimes I deserve hell, and I fear it; through Thy blessings heaven is mine, and I hope

one day to possess it. Oh, why did I not begin earlier to love Thee? *Sero te amavi, pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam nova, sero te amavi!*

1st Point. *Triumph of grace in the conversion of Augustine.* I. It was difficult to obtain it. Everything in him was opposed to the action of grace; the mind, the heart, the obstinacy of heresy, the tyranny of passions. Up to the time of his conversion, he had the pride of a philosopher, and the stubbornness of a heretic. All the passions, he says, were in a wild conflict to see which of them would be his chief tyrant. II. In him the triumph of grace was complete. When under the influence of the severest mental afflictions, he all at once heard a voice which said: *Tolle et lege.* He obeys, and immediately his mind is enlightened in an extraordinary manner; the object of his affections now changes together with his thoughts. He prays, he weeps, he has no other desire save that of doing acts of penance and mortification. An austere life will repair his former sensual life; voluntary humiliations will atone for his pride.

2d Point. *Triumphs of the Church through the conversion of Augustine.* He had been a glorious conquest of grace; he was destined to be one of its most admirable instruments. He feels the necessity of spreading the love of God, whom he loves, after having offended Him so grievously. Grace achieves through him what it had done for him: it subjugates the minds and hearts of men, and wins them over to God. He strives against all the errors, and his success is marvellous. He ceases not to preach the word of God until incapacitated by sickness. How many conversions brought about by the mere reading of the book of his confessions. How many religious institutes have adopted his rule, and have given a multitude of saints to heaven!

CXXX. MEDITATION.

SEPTEMBER 8th.—THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN. "*Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army in array?*"—(Cant. vi: 9.)

1st.—THIS FEAST REMINDS US OF THE SUBLIMITY OF OUR VOCATION.
2d.—IT ENCOURAGES US TO FULFILL IT WORTHILY.

1st Point. *This feast reminds us of the sublimity of our vocation.* What was Mary's vocation? I represent to myself a relative or friend of St. Joachim, who has entered his house soon after this blessed nativity. I suppose that whilst considering in her cradle the lovely infant, in whom are united all the charms of nature and grace, a sudden light from heaven enables him to perceive all the wonders that God has already wrought for her, and all that she has already done for God. We suppose him to be taught about her immaculate conception and its prerogatives, also about her correspondence with heavenly gifts, which has already raised her far above all the saints. . . . How great would not be his admiration? What would he think of the destiny of that infant? Would he not be justified in believing that if the most high will have a spouse, if the Son of God will have a mother, if poor sinners will have a mediator with God, the infant who has just entered the world must be that spouse, that mother, that mediator?

Mary in fact was born in order to be the mother of Jesus. *Of whom was born Jesus.* This is the principle of all her privileges, the summing up of all her praises: "*Quidquid de Virgine scire, aut intelligere cupis, totum in hoc clauditur breviloquio; De qua natus est Jesus.*"—(St. Th. a Villa. serm. de Nat. B. M. V.) It is as the mother of the Redeemer of mankind that she will be the refuge and advocate of sinners. She is the aurora which precedes and ushers in the morning sun: "*O beata Virgo, tu est aurora de sole precedens et ortum solis præveniens.*"—(St.

Bonav. Spec. B. V.) Hence we may easily explain and account for the universal feelings of joy which naturally characterize this holy festival: "*Gaudeamus et exultemus in Nativitate beatissimæ Dei Genitricis Mariæ, quæ novum mundo nuntiavit gaudium, et totius extitit humanæ salutis exordium.*"—(St. Pet. Dam. hom. 47 de Nat. B. M. V.) "*Cum summa exultatione gaudeat terra nostra, tantæ virginis illustrata natali.*"—(St. Aug. serm. de Nativ. B. V. M.) Certain it is, that if men had known the blessings which Mary's nativity drew down upon them, they would have beheld throughout the whole world a renewal of what occured among the Jews at their having been preserved from death through the meditation of Esther. "*A new light seemed to rise, joy, honor and dancing in all peoples . . . wonderful rejoicing.*"—(Esth. viii: 16, 17.)

You also, O priests, wert born for a sublime destiny! Accomplish it faithfully. You shall be for heaven and earth, the cause of an unspeakable joy. To give Jesus to the world, and with Jesus to give it all blessings, such is our vocation, and such was the vocation of Mary, and this is the reason why the holy virgin has such a warm affection for good priests and lavishes upon them such truly maternal cares.

Resemblance engenders benevolence. See how great and admirable is the analogy between the priest and the mother of God! The priesthood makes us participate in her dignity, her office, her power and felicity.—In her dignity, for the Word of God made flesh puts Himself under our dependency as He had put himself under hers, and obeys us, as he deigned to obey her in her office, for if she concurred for so large a share in the redemption of mankind, by giving to the world Him who redeemed it by His blood, we also concur therein, by applying to men the fruits of that abundant redemption.—In her power. The doctors admire the virtue of the *word. Be it done unto me according to Thy word*, by which the Son of God was attracted from the bosom of His Father into that of a virgin, and they equally admire the efficacy of the sacramental form, which spoken by us causes the Son of God to descend every day and be immolated on our altars.—Finally, are we not in some respects almost as happy as Mary? Hear St. Augustine: *Si beatus venter qui novem mensibus Christum portavit, etiam beata esse debent corda in quibus sibi hospitium quotidie eligit filius Dei. . . Si beata sunt ubera quæ parvulus, suxit, ita debet esse os beatum, quod*

carnem ejus sumit, et sanguinem sugit. Let us appreciate the favor which God granted us by calling us to the priesthood.

2d Point. *This feast reminds us that we should follow the duties of our vocation*, after Mary's example, and invoke her powerful and salutary intercession.

I. Mary has scarcely come into the world when she offers to God with a fervor greater than that of a seraph, the homage of the adoration and love she ceased not to offer to Him from the first moment of her immaculate conception. On this very day her perfect submission to God's will, her gratitude for all His blessings bring forth those excellent acts of virtue which justified her in saying: When I was little, I pleased the Lord. In Mary, God the Father sees His image resplendent with the purest beauty, whilst in the rest of mankind He sees it disfigurged by sin. The Holy Ghost banished from almost every heart, dwells in the heart of Mary as in a sanctuary worthy of Himself. The Son of God sees in her so many virtues that He longs to call her His mother. . . . Mary already exercises her priesthood: *Virgo sacerdos*, offering, in order to glorify the Holy Trinity and promote the salvation of men, all the sacrifices of her life. . . . Next to Jesus, Mary in reality affords us the most perfect model of sacerdotal sanctity. . . . Since we cannot equal her merit, let us try at least to correspond as faithfully as we can with the graces that are lavished upon us as they were lavished upon her.

II. We should be particularly animated and comforted in the exercise of our duties, notwithstanding our personal weakness and the difficulties of our ministry, knowing that we have in the protection of our august virgin mother a resource we might call infinite. If Mary be with us, who shall be against us? Then, whom will she protect, if not those who propagate her own glory and especially that of her Son? Her love for Jesus, her tender compassion for souls whose mother she became by sacrificing her Son, tell us loudly enough how earnest is her interest in our labors. Let us invoke her with unlimited confidence. This day is particularly favorable for prayer. Kings and queens of earth love to celebrate the anniversary of their birth by benefactions; and could the queen of the universe refuse us any grace on this day, having been born precisely to be the dispenser of all graces, to give life to the world, and draw down upon it all heavenly blessings? "*Maria*

hodie prodiisti . . . . guadium mundo universo annuntians, vitæ largitrix, benedictionis conciliatrix."—(St. Germ.) Let us pray to her for ourselves and for the souls confided to our care. Oh how efficaciously will we labor for their salvation, if on the occasion of this feast we exhort them to honor Mary! Let us teach them how deserving she is of our veneration, gratitude, and love. "*Prædica reverendam angelis, desideratam gentibus, patriarchis prophetisque progenitam, electam ex omnibus . . . . magnificæ gratiæ inventricem, mediatricem salutis, et restauratricem sæculorum.*"—(St. Bern., ep 174.)

1st Point. *This feast reminds us of the sublimity of our vocation.* If any one contemplating Mary immediately after her nativity had had a revelation of what she already was, what would he have thought of her future destiny? He would undoubtedly have said: If God will ever have a mother here below, there she lies in that cradle. It was in fact for this purpose that the admirable infant was born. Hence our great joy in the celebration of this feast: *Cum summa exultatione gaudeat terra nostra tantæ virginis illustrata natali.* You also, O priest were born for a sublime destiny, that is to give Jesus to the world.—Many are the points of resemblance between you and the mother of God! You participate in her dignity, her office, her power and her happiness.

2d Point. *This feast animates us to fulfill the duties of our vocation*, in view of the example which Mary gives and the assistance she offers.—How fervently she offers to God the homage of her whole self, as she had already done at the moment of her immaculate conception! . . . . She already exercises her priesthood, offering to the Holy Trinity all the sacrifices of her life!—We should be particularly encouraged in the faithful discharge of all our duties, knowing that we have in the protection of the blessed virgin an almost infinite source of assistance. Let us implore her intercession for ourselves as well as for all the souls confided to our care. Let us endeavor to make them devout servants of Mary.

CXXXI. MEDITATION.

SEPTEMBER 14th.—EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS.

1st.—NOTHING IS MORE RECOMMENDED NOR MORE INDISPENSABLE TO THE PRIEST THAN MEDITATION ON THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS.

2d.—FEW CHRISTIANS, NAY, FEW PRIESTS ARE ABLE TO SOUND THE DEPTHS OF THIS MYSTERY.

1st Point. *Nothing is more recommended and at the same time more indispensable to a priest than meditation on the mystery of the cross.* The Savior going up to Jerusalem, predicted for the third time that He would there be soon put to death. *Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all those things shall be accomplished which were spoken by the prophets concerning the Son of man.* Prodigies of charity and of patience in the Son of God; prodgies of ingratitude and perversity on the part of men; all will soon be consummated. To the apostles alone it was that Jesus Christ confided this secret. *He took unto Him the twelve and said to them.* Every one does not understand the mystery of the cross and it is not necessary that all should understand it in the same degree of perfection; but it is necessary that apostolic men should possess this sacred science in a high degree, that they should be deeply impressed with this mystery, and hence it is that the Savior so often speaks of it to them.

Amid the heavenly joys of Thabor, He wishes that they think of the sorrows of Calvary. "*They spoke of His sacrifice on Calvary which He was soon about to undergo.*"—(St. Luc, ix: 31.) If He sees their minds led astray by dreams of ambition, hoping to occupy a high rank in His kingdom, He reminds them of the ignominies of His death. *Can you drink the chalice which I shall drink?* When He gives them His flesh for food, and His blood for drink, He is careful to tell them that this is the same body which shall be given up, and the same blood which shall

be shed for them. *Which shall be given up for you . . . which shall be shed for you.* Holy communion will always be a memorial of the passion of our Lord,—*recolitur memoria passionis ejus.—O memoriale mortis Domini.* If He confers on them the power to offer on the altar His immolated body, the blood that was shed for us, it is because they may be mindful of Him and of His death. *As often as ye do these things, ye shall do them in remembrance of me.* His mystical immolation will be the memorial of His real immolation on Calvary. O priests, can we repeat those touching words which end the consecration, without admiring the love of God and confounding ourselves? He dies for us and recommends us to think of Him! Let us blush for shame, because of the hardness of our hearts, which made this recommendation so necessary, and which alas, too often renders it of no use.

This remembrance is strongly recommended to us and is also strongly connected with all our obligations. Our zeal will grow cold, if we do not frequently meditate on the sufferings of Jesus Christ. We shall not know the infinite perfections of God, His greatness, His sanctity, His mercy, His justice . . . and if so, how shall we be zealous for his glory? Neither shall we know the value of souls deemed worthy of such redemption, nor of the immensity of the happiness or of the misfortune which awaits them. Where then shall we find that generous devotedness of which we stand in need in order to save them? If we do not meditate assiduously on the cross, something essential will be lacking in the exercise of our functions. The first of our obligations is to instruct. This is our mission. *Going to teach.* What shall we preach, if not "*Jesus Christ and Him crucified?*"—(I. Cor. i: 23.) This mystery is the summary of the apostolic preaching; the foundation of our faith. It rises up, as sweet perfume, says St. Peter Damian, from every page of Scripture: "*Quæ est sacri eloquii pagina, quæ crucis mysteria non redoleat?*"—(Ser. de In. crucis.) The crucifix is a book which we should place in the hands of the ignorant and of the learned, of the sinners and of the just. "*Legit simplex, et lœtificatur, atque cumpungitur; exercitatus vero et intelligens irradiatur atque accenditur.*"—(S. Laur. just de triumph Christi agone.)

In this book, we ourselves shall learn the patience, the meekness and the tender compassion which are indispensible in the pulpit and in the confessional and while we attend the sick. This book will enlighten

us regarding the august ministry we fulfill at the altar. Let us read it with attention, let us endeavor to understand it, and we shall cease to grieve the angels by our cold representation of the man-God, agonizing in the garden of olives, dragged before the tribunals, raised on the cross, laid away in the tomb. . . . The priest, therefore, should posses in a high degree the science of Jesus crucified, if he has no other. "*I judged not myself to know anything amongst you, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*"—(I. Cor. ii: 2.) But in order to acquire it, he should often meditate on this mystery.

2d Point. *Few Christians, nay, few priests understand well the doctrine of the cross.* There was nothing obscure in the language used by our Savior in predicting His approaching death; everything in it was clear and precise; yet His words were an enigma to those who heard them. The dullness of their intellect seems surprising to the Evangelist, who relates the fact: "*And they understood none of these things, and this word was hid from them, and they understood not the things that were said.*"—(Luc. xviii: 34.) "The apostles" says St. Bonaventure, "were in this circumstance the image of those pastors who do not penetrate the mystery of the cross, and do not see it in its true light."—(Ep. in. h. l.)

There are three obstacles which shut out the minds and hearts of man from realizing this wholesome truth.—*Pride*, by which faith is darkened. We believe but faintly in this excessive charity. We would that God had no more goodness than what we can understand. Must it be then, O Jesus, that the greatness of Thy love should be for men a motive for wounding Thy heart by our incredulousness!—*Dissipation of mind.* Rarely and superficially do they reflect on a mystery which was the continual subject of the saints' meditations.

Alas, is it not true that there are priests who explain the passion of Jesus Christ, celebrate every day the holy sacrifice which is its continuation and application, and whose souls remain unmoved even at the altar? The case is different with interior men. One word on the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ; one look at the cross suffices to move them to compassion, to love and gratitude. Alas, why am I not one of the number?—*Want of mortification.* Men do not like to understand that which is incompatible with the easy, sensual life which they will not give up. Before the death of Christ the apostles

did not understand a doctrine which they did not relish. "*Non intelligebant, quia hanc veritatem non diligebant.*"—(St. Bon. Ib.) When the virtue of the cross and the grace of the Holy Ghost shall have changed them into new men, they will love and comprehend it all and exclaim: *O bona crux, quæ decorem ex membris Domini suscepisti, diu desiderata, sollicite amata . . . . accipe me ab hominibus, et redde me magistro meo, ut per te me recipiat qui per te me redemit.*

O Lord, the resolution which I now take by Thy inspiration, is often to meditate and preach on Thy sufferings. It will, if I be faithful to it, suffice to sanctify my life and fecundate my ministry. I shall find therein the motive and model of all sacerdotal virtues. Therein I shall find the most salutary consolations, and whilst loving Thee I shall thereby enjoy the pleasure of leading souls to Thee. "*Hæc meditare, fili; in his esto; et fiet tibi in cruce mea salus, vita, protectio ab hostibus, infusio supernæ suavitatis.*"—(Mem. vit. sac. c. 19.)

1st Point. *There is nothing more recommended or more indispensable than the remembrance of the mystery of the cross.* The Savior loved to remind His disciples of this subject. A few days before His passion He had minutely foretold its circumstances; nay, he spoke of it on Mount Thabor. The institution of the priesthood, of the holy Eucharist, everything in fact, tends to remind us of the mystery of the cross.

The crucifix is the book of the elect. This is the book which was the making of the saints, and which pointed out the ways which led them on to salvation. It is above all the book of priests; at this fountain-head of spiritual treasures, they find zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

2d Point. *Few Christians, nay, few priests really understand this mystery.* There was no obscurity in the Savior's language, and yet the apostles understood none of those things. Three obstacles stand in our way when we try to comprehend this wholesome truth. *Pride,* which obscures our faith. We would that God had no more goodness than we can understand; *dissipation of mind*—which prevents us from reflecting seriously. *Lack of mortification.* One is not ready to admit that which is incompatible with an easy, sensual life which he is unwilling to renounce.

CXXXII. MEDITATION.

SEPTEMBER 29th—ST. MICHAEL—"*And there was a great battle in heaven. Michael and his angels fought with the dragon.*"—(Ap. xii: 7.)

1st.—LUCIFER'S PRIDE PUNISHED; ST. MICHAEL'S HUMILITY REWARDED.

2d.—PRIDE PREPARES FOR THE FALL, HUMILITY FOR THE EXALTATION.

3d.—HOW MAY WE AVOID THE PUNISHMENT OF THE PROUD, AND DESERVE THE REWARD OF THE HUMBLE?

1st Point. *The pride of Lucifer punished, the humility of St. Michael rewarded.*

I. According to Saints Jerome and Gregory, Lucifer was, in the order of nature and of grace, the most perfect work which had come from the hand of God. It is certain, according to Scriptural inference, that pride was the cause of his fall; but in what that pride consisted cannot be equally ascertained. The common opinion is, that the good angels having been created in the state of grace and justice God willed that they should enjoy supreme and everlasting beatitude on account of the right use they made of their liberty. During this time of trial He revealed to them some of the designs of His Providence and particularly the incarnation of the word, whom he commanded them to adore, hypostatically united to our human nature. Elated over His own excellence, Lucifer feels hurt at such a command. The very thought that he must humble himself in the presence of Mary, makes him indignant. He thinks that if God is to unite Himself to one of His creatures, none of them deserves that honor as much as he; and thus, having lifted up his heart in the admiration of his beauty, this same beauty caused him to lose his wisdom. "*And thy heart was lifted up with thy beauty; thou hast lost thy wisdom in thy beauty.*"—(Ezech. xxviii: 17.)

He does more than refuse submission to God ; he prevents others from obeying Him, and convinces a great many of them that the decree which will procure so much glory for human nature is injurious to the angelical nature. . . . O the baneful effect of the scandal when it is given by those who are obliged by the very nature of their calling to give good example ! The dragon, says St. John, took away in its rebellion against God the third part of the stars of heaven. Whither will he precipitate himself with those whom he has seduced ? Down in that abyss of fire inextinguishable prepared for him and the accomplices of his pride. "*Into eternal fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels.*" Oh, the dreadful fall ! Whence does he fall? Whither does he fall? On that day for the first time was accomplished the oracle : "*He that exalteth himself shall be humbled.*" O priest, be on your guard against pride, the more so on account of your superior dignity, because greater respect is due to it. "*Altiorem locum sortitus es, non tutiorem.*"—(St. Ber. de Consid.) You will never be secure save by imitating the humility of St. Michael.

II. St. Michael is indignant at the outrage offered the sovereign Lord. He exclaims : Who is like to God? Who can refuse to obey His commands? His fidelity strengthens that of the good angels. With him they stand up for God, repeating the cry, who is like unto God ! They fight against Lucifer and are victorious. Their trial is ended, they are now confirmed in grace. God now unveils before their eyes the magnificence of His charms ; they see Him face to face ; they possess Him. What a recompense, what a happiness for all, but particularly for the chief of the celestial host ! St. Michael is established over all the princes of heaven, leader of God's people, defender of the Church, protector of the Catholic priesthood, for which he will fight until the end of time. Numberless altars and churches will be consecrated and numerous associations created in honor of St. Michael. His name in our sacred liturgy will be invoked next to that of the queen of the universe. How glorious will he not appear on the last day, when, having vanquished Antechrist, he will ascend to heaven in company with all the elect ! Behold his reward for having humbled himself before God.

2d Point. *Pride is the cause of the fall, and humility the exaltation.*

I. One must necessarily fall, when he is weakness itself, and has to struggle against an invincible power. First of all, there is nothing so unsteady as the proud man. David addressed to God the following prayer: "*Let not the foot of pride come to me.*"—(Ps. xxxv: 12.) My foot cannot be steady upon moving sand. Upon what can a man rely who is a victim to pride? Upon himself. In what does he place his trust? In himself. This is the characteristic of this vice, which Jesus Christ described in one word, "*They trusted in themselves.*"—(L. xviii: 9.) Now what is man of himself, if not simply vanity and nothingness? "*If any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.*"—(Gal. vi: 3.) "*Man is like to vanity.*"—(Ps. cxliii: 4.) —"*My substance is as nothing before Thee.*"—(Ps. xxxviii: 6.) Lucifer has come away from truth in order to rest upon lying. Such was the sole cause of his fall. "*He stood not in the truth.*"—(J. viii: 44.) St. Bernard asks what is the truth; and he answers: It is the true opinion he should have had regarding himself; of myself I am nothing; to God I owe it if I am anything; glory to God, therefore, for everything, to me nothing is due.

But were the proud man as strong as he is weak, could he resist the infinite power that opposes him? "*God resisteth the proud.*"—(I. Pet. v: 5.) God has declared that He would cede His glory to no one.—(Is. xlii: 8.) Will He not confound the rash man who will attempt to rob Him of it?

II. The reasons which show that the proud must fall, demonstrate that the humble shall be exalted. The same God who resisteth the proud gives His grace to the humble. What grace will He give them? The grace of submission to His Divine will, the grace of perseverance, etc. . . . All graces are theirs. God sustains them; they have nothing to fear, God Himself is their protector. "*God is the keeper of little ones.*"—(Ps. cxiv: 6.) Truth, that is, the intuitive and clear knowledge they have of their own nothingness, makes them depend on God alone and thus they are preserved from any spiritual wreck which might overtake them. "*Truth shall deliver you.*"—(J. viii: 32.) Their confidence is an homage rendered to the power, goodness and fidelity of the Lord. This confidence pleases Him not a little, and it draws down upon them all the benedictions of His love. "*Humilem Deus protegit et liberat; humiliem diligit et consolatur; humili homini se inclinat, humili largitur*

gratiam magnam, et post ejus depressionem levat ad gloriam."—(Im. l. ii. c. 2.) Behold the greatest exaltation as a reward for the virtue of humility.

3d Point. *How shall we be able to avoid the punishment of the proud, and to obtain the recompense of the humble?* Let our rule of conduct be the war cry of St. Michael: *Who is like unto God?* Let us also deserve the special protection of this powerful archangel.

True humility has for its foundation the knowledge of God and of oneself. Does the spirit of error incite us to vain glory? Let us answer with St. Michael. *Who is like unto God?* What am I, and what are with me all creatures in comparison with God? Am I tempted to give way to murmuring or impatience? *Who is like unto God?* Which is the more just, that God should do His will, or that I should do mine? He is my King, should I not obey Him? He is my Father, should I not love Him? Does inclination to pleasure tend to seduce me? *Who is like unto God?* Who, if not Thou, O Supreme Good, can satisfy the desires of my soul, the cravings of my heart? The same means has no less efficacy to excite us to respect and fervor when we are approaching the altar or about to begin our office. . . . *Who is like unto God?*

Not, however, by His example only does St. Michael wish to help us priests, who are in a manner his soldiers, sustaining the same cause, fighting the same enemies. Great is the help we shall obtain from him if we have recourse to his protection. He it is principally who presents to God our prayers and our sacrifices. "*Stetit angelus juxta aram templi, habens thuribulum aureum in manu sua.*"—(Brev.) He protects us at death, receives our souls and introduces them into heaven. *Archangele Michael, constitui te . . . . super omnes animas suscipiendas.*—(Ibid.)—*Signifer sanctus Michael repræsentet eas in lucem sanctam.*—(Miss. Def.) What will they ask for me, when I shall be near my end? *Suscipiat eum sanctus Michael . . . . qui militiæ cœlestis meruit principatum.*—(Rit. Comm. ani.)

Let us venerate St. Michael as the truest living image of the divinity, the richest expression of God's greatness. Let us invoke him often, especially at the foot of the altar, when we humble ourselves by a public confession of our faults. *Confiteor.* St. Laurence Justinian, recommends in the following language devotion to St. Michael: *Agnoscant singuli protectorem suum, illum laudibus efferant, frequentent*

precibus, votis amplectantur, devotione inclinent, et per emendationem vitæ lætificent; non enim poterit orantes, despicere, repellere confidentes, declinare amantes, quippe cum defendat humiles, pudicos diligat, dirigat innocentes, custodiat vitam, regat in via, perducat in patriam. —(Serm. de S. Mich.)

1st Point. *The pride of Lucifer punished, the humility of St. Michael recompensed.* Lucifer, elated over his own excellence, refuses to humble himself before a God made man. In his revolt he caused the fall of a great number of angels, and with them he himself fell into a fiery abyss, prepared for him and his accomplices. St. Michael exclaims: *Who is like to God?* His fidelity strengthens that of the good angels. . . . What is his magnificent reward?

2d Point. *Pride prepares for the fall, humility for the exaltation.* One must necessarily fall, if while on the one hand he is weak, and on the other he is attacked by an invincible power. Nothing is more feeble than the proud man, for he depends upon himself alone, and he is naught but vanity. The same God who resisteth the proud gives His grace to the humble, and is there anything that we cannot do when we have God on our side to protect and sustain us?

3d Point. *What should we do to avoid the punishment of the proud, and obtain the reward of the humble?* Adopt as the rule of your conduct the war cry of St. Michael: *Who is like to God?* Let us repeat it when tempted by vainglory, impatience, etc., when inclination to pleasure menaces us with its seductions. We may moreover expect much help from St. Michael, if we are faithful to honor him and invoke his intercession.

CXXXIII. MEDITATION.

OCTOBER 2nd—THE HOLY GUARDIAN ANGELS.

1st.—GOODNESS OF GOD IN SENDING ANGELS TO GUARD US.

2d.—CHARITY OF OUR GUARDIAN ANGELS.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Represent to yourself a multitude of angels on earth, busily engaged in rendering all sorts of services to men, to their souls and to their bodies. Behold near you the angel whom God appointed to be your guardian, and together with him adore the majesty of the Lord.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Let us ask for grace to understand the blessings we receive from God through the ministry of the angels, and to accomplish faithfully the duties which those blessings impose on us.

1st Point. *Goodness of God in sending angels to guard us.* How great man is through the mercy of God and his own destiny; how small when we consider his weakness and miseries! St. Jerome, explaining the words of Jesus Christ, "*Their angels always see the face of My Father,*" (M. viii: 10), says: *Magna dignitas animarum, ut unaquæque habeat, ab ortu nativitatis, in custodiam sui angelum deputatum.*—(Lib. iii., Comm. in Cap. xviii. Mat.) The Church to-day draws our attention to this unspeakable favor, almost universally forgotten: *Deus, qui ineffabili proventia sanctos angelos tuos ad nostram custodiam mittere dignaris.*

A powerful king sees a child of very low birth abandoned by all, destitute of every resource, and commands one of the princes of his court to take him under his protection, to educate him with the greatest care, to be always at his side day and night. I must say to myself: Here is a monarch who has the heart of a father for that child; his extraordinary goodness toward him makes it appear that he has destined

him to hold a high rank in his kingdom. This was a touching image of what God does for us through the ministry of the angels. What are we of ourselves? What can we do? What was our condition when we came into the world? But, ah, incomprehensible charity! God, says St. Bernard, was not satisfied with sending us His Son and His Holy Spirit, in order that everything in heaven might concur for our happiness, he sent angels to serve us; for this, as St. Paul teaches, is the office they have to fulfill toward us. "*Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister to those who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?*" —(Heb. i : 14.)

St. Bernard, at this, can no longer contain his admiration, and he invites us to meditate on the subject in the following language: "*Angelis suis mandavit de te! Mira dignatio! et vere magna dilectio charitatis! Quis enim, quibus, de quo, quid mandavit, studiose consideremus, fratres; diligenter commendemus memoriæ noc tam grande mandatum.*" He who sends is God, He who is sovereignly independent and self-sufficient. Those whom He sends are His angels, those spirits so pure, so holy, so superior in power to all the kings of the earth: *Angelis suis.* It was not an exhortation, it was an order He gave them: *Mandavit.* What did He command them to do? Not simply to watch over the welfare of empires, but to watch over each of us individually: *De te;* to protect us who are dust and nothingness, who are ungrateful, perfidious sinners. How far should they exercise their vigilance? In every position of life, and in all circumstances; nay, beyond the grave they will be our friends. . . . *Ut custodiant te in omnibus viis tuis.* If necessary, they shall carry you in their arms. *In their hands they shall bear thee up,* like a child whom they wish to keep from falling, "*Lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*" How full of comfort is all this. St. Bernard adds: *Adsunt igitur, et adsunt tibi: non modo tecum, sed etiam pro te; adsunt ut protegant, adsunt ut prosint.*—(In ps. qui. habitat.) What then is man, O Lord, that Thou shouldst love him to such excess, as to place by his side a prince of Thy court, whom Thou has commanded to earnestly see after all his interests?

2d Point. *Charity of our guardian angels.* Not to speak of the services they render us in temporal matters, how great is their solicitude to make us obtain the inheritance of salvation! They show us the

way that leads to heaven, remove all obstacles and procure for us the necessary means. How is it that we are so little touched by their generosity?

I. Providence has determined for each of us a particular career in this world, a place in the eternal kingdom which each must conquer. "*Behold I will send My angel, who shall go before thee and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place which I have prepared.*"—(Ex. xxiii : 20.) As the spirits of the first choirs transmit light and love to those inferior to them in the celestial Hierarchy, so our good angels give us a knowledge of what is really good, and encourage us to embrace it. When we feel inclined to detach ourselves from creatures, to give ourselves more fully to God, this is an inspiration which comes to us through our charitable guide. There is nothing more ingenious than his zeal for our sanctification. At times he proposes to us the example of Jesus Christ, or of those saints whose dispositions come nearer to our own; at others, he portrays for us in vivid colors, the shortness of life, the hour of death, eternity, etc.; again he displays before our eyes the beauties of virtue, the charms of peace, which is the reward of a good conscience, the rewards promised for constant fidelity. . . . St. Bernard represents to us this prince of heaven disguised as a servant, following our soul step by step, in order to admonish or to encourage it unceasingly. St. Louis of Grenada, looks upon our guardian angels as upon fathers full of tenderness, and entirely devoted to the welfare of their children, or as rich people who help the poor, or doctors who instruct the ignorant.

II. The guardian angel removes the obstacles which stand in the way of salvation. Be there a dangerous occasion in our path, he urges us to shun it, using a sort of violence toward us, as the Scripture tells us in the case of Loth: "*They took his hand. . . . and they brought him forth.*"—(Gen. xix : 16.) Should we happen to be under the influence of spiritual languor, sadness or despondency, our guardian angel comforts us, filling our souls with a spiritual unction which heals them. But the most dreadful obstacle to our salvation, consists in the desperate war which the spirits of darkness wage against us. They cannot, in their jealousy, become reconciled to the love that God bears us, and the glory which He has in store for us: *Ardens invidia pellere nititur, quos cœlo Deus advocat.* However, we should have confidence;

our heavenly friend is more earnest in defending us than the evil spirits in their efforts to destroy our souls. He does for his clients what Raphael did for Tobias. He chains down the evil ones or banishes them far from us. This is why the prophet, after saying: "*He has given His angels command over thee,*" adds the following words to strengthen our courage: "*Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk, and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon.*"—(Ps. xc: 13.) This lion and dragon, this asp and this basilisk, are the powers of hell which we overcome by the assistance of our guardian angels.

III. They still more directly concur in the work of bringing about our salvation by the means of sanctification which they procure for us, and principally by praying for us, and offering our prayers to God. Other angels intercede for us through the effect of a charity which is common to them all, and unite together all the children of God. But apart from this motive, our guardian angels are interested in our welfare, in virtue of an obligation inherent to their ministry, and of the ardent zeal wherewith the Lord filled them when He confided us to their protection; the Scripture says that in establishing them His ministers, He made them active as a flame of fire. "*He that maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire.*"—(Heb. i: 7.) They are, at one and the same time, near God whom they behold, relishing the sweetness of His possession, and near us also, considering our dangers and miseries. This is why, being full of compassion for us, they cease not to offer fervent prayers to God for our sanctification.

They also offer our prayers to God. Let us listen to the apostle St. John: "*And another angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel.*"—(Ap. viii: 3, 4.) Raphael made the following relation to Tobias: "*When thou didst pray with tears, and didst bury the dead, and didst leave thy dinner, and hide the dead by day in thy house, and bury them by night, I offered thy prayer to the Lord.*"—(Tob. xii: 12.) Ah, how blest we are, exclaims Bossuet, in having friends with God who are so devoted to us! They are not satisfied with placing our requests at the foot of His throne; they also carry thither our good works, those acts

of charity toward the poor and the sick, that hidden alms and that insult forgiven, that fasting, that mortification. . . . They gather up our very thoughts and desires, asking, praying that they may receive a reward. But ah, who can tell how joyfully they present to God the tears of repentant sinners, and the sufferings born with patience and humility for His sake?

Finally, at the hour of death, during those last struggles, when our eternal doom is on the point of being decided, they display greater vigilance and solicitude to repress the fury of our enemies and to create in us the spirit of compunction, of penance and of fervor. Their mission is continued even beyond the grave. If we are condemned to the last and painful expiations of purgatory, they will not fail to visit and comfort us; they will solicit prayers in our behalf, inspire fervent souls with the thought of assisting us efficaciously, and negotiate with Almighty God the great affair of our deliverance. What have we done so far in the way of acknowledgment of the Lord's goodness and of that zeal so pure, so tender, and so constant, of the angel whom He has given us as our guardian? Let us bewail our ingratitude and begin this very day to make reparation for it.

1st Point. *God's goodness in sending angels to be our guardians.* The Church on this day draws our attention to a Divine favor, which to her appears to be ineffable: *Deus qui ineffabili providentia.* O incomprehensible charity, God was not satisfied with sending us His Son and His Holy Spirit. He also sent us His angels to serve us. *He has given His angels command over thee.* He who sends is God; those whom He sends are princes of His court. To whom and for what purpose does He send them? Each of those words ought to be deeply considered.

2d Point. *Charity of the angels in watching over us.* Let us not speak of the natural order but of salvation only. They show us the way to it, remove all obstacles, procure for us the means to walk in it safely. They give us the knowledge of that which is the true good, and help us by their holy inspirations to embrace the same. They shield us from sin, show us where danger lurks, strengthen us in times of weakness, console us in our afflictions, defend us against the devil. They

concur more directly still to our salvation, by praying for us and offering our supplications to God. At the hour of death, they display greater vigilance and solicitude, in order to make us victorious in our last struggle. Their charity accompanies us even beyond the grave; they will visit and comfort us in purgatory, they will solicit prayers in our behalf, and by every means will hasten the time of our entrance into the mansions of God's glory.

CXXXIV. MEDITATION.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED—OUR DUTIES TOWARD OUR GUARDIAN ANGELS.

1st.—GENERAL DUTIES COMMON TO ALL THE FAITHFUL.

2d.—PARTICULAR DUTIES OF PRIESTS AND PASTORS TOWARD THEM.

1st Point. *General duties of all the faithful toward their guardian angels.* These are three, according to St. Bernard: Respect, gratitude and confidence. We owe our good angel respect, because of his presence, gratitude, because of the services he rendered us, and confidence because of his most reliable and effectual protection. *Reverentiam pro præsentia, devotionem pro benevolentia, fiduciam pro custodia.*

I. Respect. God Himself commanded it. *Take notice of him . . and do not think him one to be contemned*, and the sublime motive of the commandment He assigns, in saying: "*My name is in Him.*"—(Exod. xxiii: 21.) Such, in fact, is the excellence and dignity of the angel, that he is the noblest and truest expression of the Divinity. He is the first ray of God's beauty, the first work of His hands, the first masterpiece of His wisdom. St. John having beheld him who had revealed to him so many mysteries, fell prostrate to adore him; thinking that he was the Son of God Himself. St. Anselm asserts, that if an angel were to make himself visible in all his glory, in place of the sun, he would darken by his splendor as many suns (if they were in existence) as there are stars in the firmament.

The majesty of a king impresses with respect all those who approach him; what then should be our respect in presence of this prince of heaven so far superior to all the potentates of earth? For, says St. Bernard, wherever you may chance to be, in the Church, or in the house, on the way, or in the public places, either alone, or in company, your guardian angel is near you. Do not do in his presence what you would not dare do before me. *Tu ne audeas, illo præsente, quod, vidente me, non auderes?* Do you question his presence because you do not see him? But the testimony of our eyes is neither the more sure nor the only evidence we have of the presence of things. This sense does not extend its power to spiritual objects, neither are all the corporal objects subject to its domain. Do they perceive sounds? Have they the sense of smell? Who would pretend to deny their existence because they are not seen? *Vide quia non solo visu rerum præsentia comprobatur.* Is not the vision of our faith more sure than that of our natural eyes? Walk, therefore, cautiously, since your angel sees you. "*Caute ambula, ut videlicet cui adsunt angeli.*"—(In. Ps. Qui. habitat.)

II. To respect you should join love and gratitude. When the angel of the Hebrew people had divided the waters of the Red sea, and engulfed the Egyptians into depths, he continued, according to God's command, to assist them until he had established them in the Promised Land. So also does our good angel assist us, when we have escaped through the waters of baptism, the slavery of the powers of hell, this zealous protector, accompanies us through the desert of this life, which we have to traverse in order to reach heaven. At times, like a mysterious cloud, he moderates the violence of our passions, at other times like a bright fire, he enlightens us in the dark night of our ignorance. For us he causes the manna of heavenly consolations to come down, he sweetens the bitter waters of penance. . . . He teaches us the law of God and strives to engrave it on the living table of our hearts.

To the Lord, it is true, I am indebted for all these goods. *What shall I return to the Lord?* I should have no angel to serve me had not this good Master given him to me. *He has given His angels command over thee.* Glory be to God who has given this command. But I should also be thankful to him who executes it with so much charity. It is in imitation of Divine goodness that the angels adopt toward us inclinations of such wonderful benevolence. They clearly see into the

mysteries of the Incarnation, of the redemption and all the others connected with them. If they had a life and blood to offer for us, how gladly would they give up both for our redemption! Ah! to be ungrateful toward such friends would certainly be a crime!

Young Tobias knew not what expression of gratitude to offer his heavenly guide. "*Father, what wages shall we give him or what may be worthy of his benefits? He conducted me and brought me safe again . . . we are filled with all good things through him.*"—(Tob. xii : 2, 3.) And what shall I do in return for all the blessings which I owe to my guardian? I shall love him tenderly, I shall hear his words, shall be docile to his inspirations; I shall avoid whatever might displease the holiness of his presence; I shall practice the virtues which are dear to him; purity, humility, zeal, conformity to the will of God.

III. I shall place my confidence in him. *Fiduciam pro custodia.* If I had for a friend a man whom I justly thought to be the most enlightened, the most faithful and powerful of all men, would not I rely upon him with entire security? But such our guardians are, says St. Bernard. *Prudentes sunt, fideles sunt, potentes sunt.* They cannot be led astray, for at the very source of truth do they draw their knowledge. *They always see the face of the Father.* Much less would they be willing to deceive us, for they are friends of unshaken faithfulness. Let us think of the three-fold tie which unites them to us. They love us for the sake of God, knowing how much he loves us, they love us for ourselves, seeing in us the image of the Divinity; they love us for themselves, considering us as their brethren, and their future associates in the kingdom of heaven.—Neither is power wanting to them any more than science and love, and with the virtue they receive from above, one of them alone can use more power for our sanctification, than all the devils together for our loss. For this reason it is that Tertullian said, that through the help of the angels, the power of the devil is subject to the power of man. Let us again hear St. Bernard: "*Quid sub tantis custodibus timeamus? . . . Tantum sequamur eos, adhæreamus eis, et in protectione Dei cœli commoremur. Quoties ergo gravissima cernitur urgere tentatio, et tribulatio vehemens imminere, invoca custodem tuum, ductorem tuum adjutorem tuum. . . . Inclama eum, et dic: Domine, salva nos, perimus.*"—(Ibid.)

2d Point. *Particular duties of priests and pastors toward guardian*

angels. Which are the grounds of these duties, and in what do they consist?

I. The numerous and honorable relations which we have with these holy spirits, and the great assistance we receive from them as priests and pastors, are motives of devotion toward them which regard us alone.

It might be said that the militia of heaven is but one with that of earth. Let us see how many things that are common to the priest as pastor, and to the guardian angel. "*The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge . . . because he is the angel of the Lord of hosts.*"—(Mal. ii : 7.) The name is one and the same ; the mission is also one, viz., in regard to God, to sing His praises, to propagate and sustain His worship ; with regard to men to purify, enlighten and defend them ; their ministry is as it were one, a ministry of love, of truth, of reconciliation, of peace. The angels, however, do not exercise their ministry through the medium of the senses ; the Catholic priesthood it is, which seconding their invisible operation, and being seconded by it, is the visible dispenser of the mysteries of God. The priest speaks to the ear, the angel acts immediately on the intelligence and the heart. Through the mutual concourse of the priest and of the angel, the work of sanctification is accomplished.

On this account the ministers of the Lord are the special objects of angelical protection. Because of their zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, they take a lively interest in our labors. Ah, how useful is their assistance to us when we announce the word of God, when we are at the altar, in the confessional, near the sick and the dying! How many graces of preservation did we not already receive from them in the midst of great dangers? How often did they not suddenly illuminate our minds, in most embarrassing circumstances? How many times did we not say to ourselves under the influence of anxiety, or perhaps of despondency : What shall be done? How can I come out of this difficulty? And our guardian came to the rescue and delivered us, as Peter was delivered out of prison. If there be the same relation between benefactions and love as there is between wood and fire, there are no persons who should love the angels so much as priests and pastors. How shall we show that we love them?

II. Let us not forget to honor them by those general duties com-

mon to all, or which we have meditated upon. Another mode of expressing our love to them and which would be most acceptable to them, would be to imitate them, since they are perfect models of sacerdotal and pastoral virtues, recollection in the action, meekness, patience, devotedness. Our duty is to show the faithful how to honor them and to make up for the almost universal indifference of others. Who are they who know of the holy angels and of our happiness in having one of them for our guardian? Speak often of this interesting subject. Do you recommend this devotion to the children, to the young, to persons of all ages, especially in the time of temptation? Go in spirit to the countries inhabited by heretics and infidels, to the great centers of population; go through those countless multitudes. . . . How many guardian angels amongst them, who are ignored or forgotten? Let you venerate them; but render special homage to those of your parish, and of the souls intrusted to your care. Pray to them, you pastor, to watch with you over your flock, to call you on time to visit the sick. . . . The good priest makes it a practice to salute the guardian angels of his penitents in the confessional, and in the pulpit, and whilst teaching catechism, to salute those of their hearers. He, moreover, in his prayers, functions, administration of the sacraments, visits . . . does nothing save in concert and union with these powerful auxiliaries. Finally, he repeats often himself, and directs those under his care to repeat this pious invocation: *Angele Dei, qui custos es mei, me tibi commissum pietate superna, illumina, custodi rege et guberna.* Examine in what manner you may have been wanting in devotion toward the guardian angels, and take proper resolutions.

1st Point. *General duties common to all toward our guardian angel.* According to St. Bernard, they are respect, gratitude, confidence. *Reverentiam pro præsentia, devotionem pro benevolentia, fiduciam pro custodia.* I. Respect. God commands it. Take notice of him, . . do not think him one to be contemned . . . and my name is in him. Do not, says St. Bernard, do in his presence what you would not dare do before me. II. Gratitude. He renders to us so many services, and with so great a charity. The young Tobias knew not what mark of gratitude he could give to his guide. And what shall

I do to thank my guardian angel? III. Confidence. He is wise, enlightened, faithful, devoted and mighty. . . What have I to fear under his guidance, provided I be docile?

2d Point. *Special duties of priests and pastors toward their guardian angels.* Our relations with them are many and most honorable. Same mission regarding to God. . . . regarding to men. . . . The priest speaks to the ear, the angels act on the intelligence and the heart. Through their mutual concourse, the work of sanctification is accomplished. In a special manner we are under the influence of angelical protection. They take the most lively interest in the success of our labors. If we stop to think of the blessings we receive we will at once concede that priests and pastors above all other mortals should have an unbounded love for their guardian angels. Let us imitate them as much as we can. Let us teach the faithful how to honor them. Let us make up for the too prevalent indifference of men toward them. Let us often recite and teach others to recite the admirable invocation: *Angele Dei qui custos es mei.*

CXXXV. MEDITATION.

OCTOBER 4th—ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI.

This saint was born at Assisi, a town of Ombria, in 1182. In his youth he was very fond of pleasures and riches, but to counteract those evil inclinations, God had inspired him with a tender affection for the poor and his alms obtained for him the grace to gain great victories over the world and over himself. Having attained his twenty-fifth year, he did something really heroic, which obtained grace for him to enter the way which subsequently led him on to the most sublime perfection.

His father, who was a merchant, and strongly attached to the goods of earth, unable to understand or put up with his son's extraordinary liberality toward the poor, desired him to give up, in presence of the bishop, all title to succession. Francis readily consented, and, filled with the most pious and fervent inspirations, he actually took off his

clothes and placed them at his father's feet, saying to him with as much sweetness as of calmness: "Hitherto I have called you my father; henceforth I shall say with greater confidence: Our Father who art in heaven." That day was the beginning of a complete transformation; ever afterward his life was truly marvellous. He associated to himself companions of his poverty, with whom he founded the order of *friars minor*. Ten years later he held the famous chapter of the *mats*,[1] at which they counted five thousand religious, although a certain number of the members had remained in each of their respective convents. He died on the 12th of October, 1226, in the forty-fifth year of his age, and was canonized on July 10th, 1228.

The good priest upon entering the priesthood generously renounced everything in order to consecrate himself to Jesus Christ, and the first reward of the sacrifice is to find in Jesus Christ one hundredfold more than what was given up for His sake. St. Francis of Assisi placed before our eyes—

1st.—EVANGELICAL SELF-DENIAL PRACTICED IN ALL ITS PERFECTIONS.
2d- THE PROMISE OF THE ONE HUNDREDFOLD ACCOMPLISHED IN ITS FULLEST SENSE.

1st Point. *St. Francis practiced evangelical self-denial in all its perfection.* Satan, with the help of three passions, love of riches, love of honor, and love of pleasure, ravages the world, outrages God and destroys souls: with the help of the three virtues, love of poverty, love of contempt, and love of sufferings, Jesus Christ and His saints glorify God, destroy the work of Satan, and save souls. These evangelical virtues shone out conspicuously in St. Francis of Assisi.

I. Love of poverty. Bossuet has said of our saint that he was the most fervent, the most frenzied, and if he dared so to speak, the most desperate lover of poverty. He loved it and caused it to be loved.

In his youth he had been remarked for his fondness of dress and of magnificence. They saw him renounce a life of pleasure and opulence for a life of the most absolute destitution. Before taking this determin-

1. This chapter was so named, because the religious who attended it dwelt under cabins made out of mats.

ation he had to strive in different ways, nay, against the holy joy he felt in helping the indigent. He prizes the happiness of eating the bread of alms with Jesus Christ as being far greater than that of nourishing Jesus Christ in the person of the poor. God made man, was born, lived and died destitute of everything, having naught whereupon to lay His head! O holy poverty, O priceless treasure! No, No! No riches can be compared with thee!

He called poverty his lady, his queen, his mother, his spouse, and he earnestly asked it of God. The following was his favorite prayer: Lord Jesus show me the ways of poverty. Should not this virtue so dear to Thy heart, be likewise dear to mine? Have mercy on me, for I love it so passionately, that without it I cannot live. . . . Mark me with its seal. Let it be my privilege and that of my brethren to possess nothing, to live by alms, and to be so reserved in the use we make of them, that we may never be without experiencing some effects of holy poverty.

If virtues had a human form, says Father Nouet, evangelical poverty should have assumed the body, the mind, the birth, the life and death of St. Francis. His *birth*, for he was born in a stable; his *death*, for before expiring he had his clothes taken off, to assume an old torn habit as an alms and stretched himself on ashes. His *life*, for after renouncing his paternal inheritance, he owned nothing he could call his own. His *body*, for he treated it as a slave to whom he refused everything that was not absolutely necessary for his subsistence; his *spirit*, for it was directly opposed to that of covetousness. The covetous man is jealous of him who is richer than himself. St. Francis is jealous of every poor person who surpasses him in indigence. The covetous man never feels that he has enough. Francis always finds that he has too much; the poorer he is the more contented he is. He loved poverty and received the gift of making it loved by others.

He overruns the cities and the country, repeating everywhere the first oracle of Jesus Christ in His discourse on the mountain. *Blessed are the poor.* Blessed is he who loves nothing in the world save for God's sake! Still more blessed is he who possesses nothing therein! His words and example produce such an impression, that there assembles around him a whole people, as it were, made up of persons who have embraced voluntary poverty. With their assistance, he founds a soci-

ety to which he gives as a foundation the poverty of Jesus Christ, promising that the same will enjoy the support of heaven and abundant benedictions, as long as poverty shall flourish in its bosom. How many the precautions which he used to maintain therein perfect detachment from all things of earth! Nay, in the very temple which they were to raise to the honor of God, he willed that everything should breathe simplicity, modesty, poverty. Always patient and meek, he shows severity and fulminates anathemas against those who would attempt to weaken the spirit of holy poverty among his religious family.

II. His love of being despised. This is the perfection of humility, in which principally, says St. Augustine, that poverty of spirit consists. St. Francis knew well, that in embracing a mode of life entirely opposed to the wisdom of the world, he was exposing himself to contempt. In fact, the people of Assisi, seeing him so disfigured, dressed in so strange a manner, follow him through the streets, laughing him to scorn as though he were a fool; his father has him taken to prison, and loaded with chains as a dangerous maniac. . . . Like Jesus Christ, he thirsted after reproaches and like Him he was filled with them. Later on, he saw himself the object of universal admiration, because of his miracles; but on this account he becomes more humiliated in his own eyes. When they mention to him the great things that he does, he simply answers like Mary to Elizabeth: *He looked down upon the loveliness.* If God makes use of Him, it is simply because He finds no one else as vile, as weak as he is, and consequently so proper to give relief to the skill of the workman, through the worthlessness of the instrument he employs.

He debases himself far below everybody and everything, considering that he is an unworthy sinner, capable of committing every crime if the hand of God did not sustain him. The more graces he receives the more does he bewail his ingratitude, being convinced that others would turn them to greater advantage.

III. Love of sufferings. Divine charity had so inflamed his heart after his conversion, that the passion of Jesus Christ was the ordinary subject of his thoughts. He ardently desired to return to Him life for life. Thrice did he seek the occasion to die a martyr's death in the midst of the infidels, and he consoles himself over the refusal of this favor, by making his body a victim of penance. Was there any kind

of tortures that he did not invent to crucify his flesh? He lies down on hard stones, as if the bare ground was too soft for him ; he constantly wears about him a course piece of hair-cloth ; rolls himself in the snow and amongst thorns ; each year he keeps four lenten seasons, eating no other than the coarsest kind of food, in which he would at times mix ashes. . . . His senses might murmur, nature might complain, Francis thinks only of imitating Jesus' sufferings. He lives for nothing but the cross. Continually contemplating the Savior covered with wounds, he cannot resolve to live without wounds. . . . His desire shall be granted. Behold him in a lonely desert; he complains that men who shed the blood of his Master, continue refusing to shed that of his servant, when suddenly he receives in his body the impression of the five wounds of Jesus Christ; which makes of him a living victim and a perfect image of the man of sorrows. Did man ever see evangelical self-abnegation practiced to such perfection? Let us see how perfectly it was rewarded even on earth.

2d Point. *The promises of the one hundredfold accomplished admirably in favor of St. Francis.* He was rich in his indigence, happy in his sufferings, honored in his humiliations.

I. St. Francis found abundance in his indigence. Jesus Christ asked His apostles on the eve of His death : "*When I sent you without purse and scrip and shoes, did you want anything?*" Their answer was unanimous : "*But they said, nothing.*"—(Luc. xxii : 35, 36) Francis is none else than a poor, obscure man, without credit, without authority ; but because he is one of the poor of Jesus Christ, his poverty shall be fruitful, and will provide him with a fund more certain and solid than all the treasures of earth. Convents are built for him, provisions pour in for the nourishment of his numerous family. He has more to do in refusing the superfluous than in seeking the necessaries of life ; more occupied is he in guarding his children against the allurements of riches, than in mitigating the rigors of the poverty which they have embraced. The poor of Jesus Christ, says St. Bernard, are by far the richer, since Providence gives them all they need and that they wish for nothing more.

II. In the midst of sufferings he found the source of veritable delights. People think that the cross of Jesus Christ makes none but saints ; they are mistaken, it also makes people happy. The heart, says

Salvien, is the seat of happiness; man is happy as soon as he is what he wishes to be. Now, never had pleasure as much attraction for the heart of a worldling, as sufferings had for the heart of Francis of Assisium. . . . Was there on earth a man as well pleased with his lot, as this poor Francis, who in his desert, in the midst of all his afflictions, being inebriated with joy, in the midst of all his troubles, spent entire nights repeating: *My God and my all! I possess my God, and in Him I possess everything.* He looked for happiness in that which separated him from creatures more entirely, and united him to God more intimately. He found Him, and would never tire of repeating: *My God and my all*, and while so saying his heart would burst out into sighs, his eyes poured forth streams of those tears with which the consoler gratifies his friends when he gives Himself to them by intimate communication. During his contemplation, in the midst of his labors, at every hour, in every place, he repeated and with renewed transports of joy: *O my all, O my God! O my God and my all!*

III. He found immense glory in humiliations. It is said of Solomon that he was glorified above all other kings on account of his wisdom and his riches. Francis of Assisi was glorified amongst all the saints through his apparent and his real poverty. As he seeks to be despised by the world, so does the world seek to honor him. What is he going to ask the sultan of Egypt, the sworn enemy of the Christian name? The least he expects to obtain, is to be treated by him as Jesus was by Herod. . . . Instead of this, he is admired by him and receives expressions of respect rather than of reproaches. Often upon returning home to his country, he would be welcomed by great concourses of clergy and people, with rejoicings, cheerings and songs of gladness. They press upon him, desirous of touching his garments, of kissing his feet. His companions shared these honors with him and the more were they ingenious after his example, in seeking to be despised, the more would the world bestow tokens of respect and esteem upon them. Could it be otherwise, at the sight of the extraordinary gifts which heaven caused to shine in the father and his children? So it is, O my God, that Thou dost hasten to reward generous souls. They reserve nothing for themselves through the sacrifices which they make, and Thou settest no limits to Thy love. Extinguish within our hearts

all affections for things of earth ; teach us to stifle our love of self, that we may love Thee, and Thee alone ! We shall then, like Francis, depend entirely upon Thee, and shall repeat with him exultingly : *O my God ! O my all !*

1st Point. *St. Francis practiced evangelical self-abnegation in all its perfection.* Perfect abnegation of self contains the perfection of three virtues.

I. Love of poverty. Francis possessed it in such a high degree that he preferred it to the pleasure of helping the poor ; he willed rather to eat the bread of alms with Jesus Christ, than to give Him food in the persons of the indigent. His favorite prayer was : Lord, show me the ways of poverty . . . so passionately do I love it, that without it, I cannot live. He loved poverty, and received the gift of communicating that love to others.

II. The love of contempt. This is the perfection of humility. Francis, like his Master, hungered after reproaches, he was overwhelmed with them. When mocked and insulted, he felt inexpressible joy ; the more they honor him, the more contemptible he is in his own eyes.

III. The love of sufferings. The passion of Jesus Christ was the ordinary object of his thoughts. He was inflamed with a desire to return to Him life for life. Was there any kind of torture which he did not contrive in order to crucify his flesh ? He shall be entitled to say with St. Paul : *I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus on my body.*

2d Point. *The promises of the one hundred-fold admirably accomplished in St. Francis.* He found abundance in destitution. His poverty became for him a more solid, certain fund than all the treasures of the world, and he was more busily engaged in refusing the superfluous, than in seeking what is necessary. He took great delight in the midst of sufferings. Alone in his deserts and solitudes, he spent whole nights in repeating : *My God and my all !* And in so saying his heart was inundated with joy.—He found glory in humiliations. What man was ever as much honored as he ? The more he sought to be despised by the world, so much the more did the world multiply its tokens of respect and veneration toward him.

CXXXVI. MEDITATION.

OCTOBER 15th—ST. THERESA.

This illustrious Saint was born at Avila, a city of Spain, on the 28th of March, 1515. The hearing of *The Lives of the Saints*, which was read every day, in common, in the family of her virtuous parents, inspired her from a most tender age, with an ardent desire to die for Jesus Christ. Having attempted, without success, to go amongst the Moors in order to suffer martyrdom, she resolved to live as a hermit, as far as she could, in the house of her parents. At the age of 12 she lost her mother, and soon after she became passionately fond of reading frivolus books, which might have caused her ruin, had she not been sent to a convent boarding school. Here God showed her the abyss from which He had saved her, and inspired her to go to the house of the Carmelites of Avila where she took the habit on November 21st, 1536, at the age of 21 years. The order of Carmelites had lost much of its primitive fervor. Theresa received from heaven the mission of reforming it. She began by reforming the convents for women, and soon after, being encouraged by previous success, and with the concourse of St. John of the Cross, she undertook to establish the same reformation in the convents for men. God blessed her efforts, and after experiencing much opposition, she had the consolation of seeing the rule adopted by thirty-two monasteries, which spread all about the odor of the purest virtues. She died in 1582, and was canonized in 1621.

We shall apply to Theresa the words of Isaias : "*I will deal confidently, and I will not fear, because the Lord is my strength and my praise.*"—(Is. xii: 2.)

1st.—HER COURAGE CONFOUNDS OUR SLUGGISHNESS.

2d.—HER SUCCESS CONFOUNDS OUR DIFFIDENCE.

1st Point. *The courage of St. Theresa confounds our sluggishness.* Courage is measured by the greatness of enterprises, and by the dfficul-

ties which they overcome. Theresa has nothing else in view than to raise herself to eminent holiness, and to lead a great many souls unto the same; but in order to realize these two noble purposes, the obstacles which presented themselves seemed to be unsurmountable. In herself she saw inclinations well adapted to preclude all hope of attaining this degree of holiness, and from those around her she experienced contradictions well apt to make her give up the work of their sanctification. With God's grace and by constancy she triumphed over every obstacle.

I. From her childhood she had felt an ardent desire to sacrifice her life for the God who had loved her so much as to die for her. . . But, O the strange mixture of strength and weakness! She would have had courage to die a martyr, and yet was unable to practice vigilance. She would cheerfully have given up her blood for Jesus Christ, and she refuses to deprive herself, for love of Him, of certain natural gratifications. She would have been lost if the spell had lasted. The heart of Theresa, destined to be so replenished with Divine love as to deserve for her the appellation of the seraphic virgin, that heart was about to become the slave of a miserable feeling of vanity! Thy eye watched over her, O my God. Those passing failings of Theresa, will only serve to show forth the power of Thy grace, and the patience of Thy love.

Her vocation to the religious life was, for her, the occasion of terrible struggles. To leave all, and forever to live under an austere rule, in perpetual dependence; this was indeed to be a great sacrifice! But on the other hand, would she be rash enough to expose herself to damnation? What a glory to belong to God alone! What a torment nevermore to belong to oneself! . . . . Jesus offers her His cross, and she accepts it. So painful was this determination to our saint, that, in describing her torture, she compares it to the dislocation of bones, and a violent tearing off, of limbs. Nothing, however, breaks down her courage. The more bitter the cup was, the more merit does she gain by drinking it to the dregs. Other painful sacrifices did her heavenly spouse demand of her even after the emission of her vows, by urging her, for love of Him, to renounce too frequent and intimate conversations with seculars. "God," she said, "called me in one direction, and the world in another; my soul was in continual trouble and distress. Twenty years have I spent in that struggle. My falls were numerous, and my returns to God destitute of generosity."

It is, therefore, true that the nature of the saints was not different from ours, that some of them remained a long time in a state of languor before attaining a high perfection. Why then should we give way to discouragement? Theresa, however, was not satisfied with sanctifying herself alone.

II. Being inflamed with an ardent zeal for the glory of God, and the salvation of her brethren, the thought of so many souls which go to destruction, filled her with bitter anguish. She prays fervently for the conversion of sinners, for the apostles who go to preach the Gospel in foreign countries. . . . She now feels inspired to labor in person for the perfection of the religious, and with this end in view, she undertakes the reformation of the Order of Mount Carmel. She foresees the storms of contention that she will give rise to, but God is her strength and she fears nothing.

As soon, indeed, as she had made known her intentions, a spirit of bitterness and animosity broke out against her in all Spain. She was censured by all. She was but a proud religious, a hypocrite, desirous of domineering by distinguishing herself by some conspicuous action. Such were the grievances laid to her charge. Her designs are opposed everywhere. The more moderate expressed pity for her, as being led astray by her exalted imagination and an imprudent zeal. Countless were the vexations she had to suffer during the twenty years which she devoted to the execution of her design. Far from losing courage, she fancied that in this opposition on the part of men, there was a certain evidence of the approval of heaven. She had but one fear when the interests of God were at stake, and that was to be wanting in confidence.

The virtues which were the result of so many trials compel us to acknowledge that it was both more glorious for her and more instructive for us that her pious projects should have met with so much opposition. It was more glorious for her, for in this we have to admire the constancy of a soul particularly characterized by weakness. It was more instructive for us, for at the sight of her invincible courage, we feel ashamed of our sluggishness which dares not undertake anything, and becomes disheartened at the least difficulty. Let us humble ourselves deeply, and make an act of faith concerning the sacred oracle. "*I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me.*"—(Phil. iv : 13.)

2d Point. *St. Theresa's success is a condemnation of our diffidence.*

She is but a feeble person; her designs are great; the difficulties in her way appear to be unsurmountable, and yet she succeeds in everything. The secret of her success lies in her confidence in God and nothing else. Notwithstanding most severe trials, such as dislike, weariness in spiritual life, she attains eminent sanctity. She meets naught but oppositions and contradictions in the work of the reformation, and yet the reformation flourishes and spreads to different countries.

Each Christian and sacerdotal soul has its particular graces, and the degree of its perfection consists in its fidelity to follow it. The peculiar grace of Theresa was that of orison. She writes: "One day when, by the advice of my confessor, I was fervently praying to God to let me know His will, I had an ecstasy, and I distinctly heard these words: I will that henceforth thy conversation be with the angels." This was for her the beginning of a radical change. She renounced her former friendships, and gave herself unreservedly to the most intimate communications with God. From that time she was raised up to a most extraordinary mode of orison. In those visitations from heaven, she received the many extraordinary inspirations which have made her writings one of the richest treasures of the science of the saints. There it was, principally, that she obtained that Divine love which directed all her works and comforted her in her trials.

The two loves by which God sanctifies the most perfect souls, viz.: The love of suffering, and the love of enjoyment, were equally conspicuous in St. Theresa. Love of suffering. Her perpetual fastings, her long vigils, the sharp thorns with which she used to tear her flesh, her sicknesses, temptations, interior desolations; all that agglomeration of pains which she endured, surpasses anything that can be said or written, but surpasses not what she desired to suffer. The greater is the number of her crosses, the more of them does she desire to receive. Suffering or death alone can satisfy her love: *Aut pati aut mori.* Love of enjoyment. Who could tell the joy which inundated her soul during those ecstacies and apparitions of the Savior, when He revealed to her the wonders of His mercy in her regard, as when He said to her, that if heaven had not been created, he would create it for her? . . . By following those two different roads, she arrived at the most sublime perfection.

In the reformation of the Order of Mount Carmel, her success was

especially great, notwithstanding the obstinate opposition of a superior who allowed himself, God so willing, to have become prejudiced against her. Though destitute of all human assistance, she accompanied her pious project by means of her boundless confidence in God. All glory reverts to the Lord, for His powerful arm has done everything.

Let us return thanks to God for the graces He deigned to grant to St. Theresa, and through her to the whole Church. Let us imitate her courage, and her confidence in God. We shall see the following oracle realized in ourselves as it was in her: "*They that hope in the Lord, shall renew their strength. They shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*"—(Is. xl : 31.)

1st Point. *The courage of St. Theresa confounds our sluggishness.* Greatness of her undertakings. She resolves to reach a degree of eminent holiness, and with her to lead a great number of souls to perfection. Many were the obstacles of all kinds, many her struggles, interior and exterior, when she embraced the religious state. God called her in one direction and the world in another. She foresees many difficulties in the work of her intended reformation; but God will be her strength.

2d Point. *The successes of St. Theresa condemn our diffidence.* She succeeded in reaching a high degree of holiness, notwithstanding the distastes, weariness, etc., . . . of the spiritual life. She also succeeded in the reformation of the Order of Mount Carmel, and saw it flourish and spread far and near, notwithstanding contradictions and oppositions. Each soul has its special grace; the special grace of Theresa was the gift of orison. Through it she obtained the two Divine loves which were so remarkable in her person, the love of suffering and the love of enjoyment.

CXXXVII. MEDITATION.

NOVEMBER 1st.—ALL SAINTS' DAY.

The Church offers to us on this day three great subjects of joy and edification: The *happiness*, the *example*, and the *intercession* of the saints.

1st.—THE HAPPINESS OF THE SAINTS GIVES US A PRESENTIMENT OF OUR OWN HAPPINESS IN HEAVEN, AND INFLAMES OUR DESIRES.

2d.—THE EXAMPLE OF THE SAINTS SHOWS US THE WAY THAT LEADETH TO THIS HAPPINESS, AND REMOVES IMAGINARY DIFFICULTIES.

3d.—THEIR INTERCESSION ENABLES US TO WALK THEREIN WITH ARDOR AND PERSERANCE.

FIRST PRELUDE.—I figure to myself heaven, open over my head. I see therein all the saints stretching out their arms to me and inviting me to come and share their happiness. I hear them repeating, as a joyous canticle, the Gospel of the Beatitudes: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. . . . Blessed are the meek. . . .Blessed are the clean of heart. . . . Blessed are they that weep*, etc.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Blessed friends of God, obtain for me the grace to imitate you faithfully, in the life of abnegation and charity which you embraced with so much wisdom, and kept up with so much courage and perseverance.

1st Point. *The happiness of the saints affords us a fore-knowledge of our own, and inflames our desires.* Heaven has been conquered for us, as it was for the innumerable multitude of saints whose crowns and palms the Church causes to shine so brilliantly before our eyes on this day. "*I saw a great multitude which no man could number . . . and palms in their hands.*"—(Ap. vii.) The blood of Jesus Christ gives us the same claims to it as it did to the saints. All that we have to do is to take possession thereof.

O my soul, on this day, at least, do thou leave the earth: *Sursum corda.* Enter this palace of the elect of which God Himself is the Architect, and wherein He displays all His magnificence. Contemplate leisurely the august and delightful society into which thou shalt have a place, unless thou wilt be senseless enough to exclude thyself from its ranks. Behold the choirs of the angels, of the arch angels, of the thrones, of the dominations, the venerable assembly of the patriarchs, of the

prophets, of the apostles, the triumphant army of the martyrs . . , the imposing senate of the pontiffs and of the doctors, the victorious troop of all the good priests who fought so valiantly for Jesus Christ and for the salvation of souls. Behold, after a few moments of light tribulation, they enjoy immense glory, and are inebriated with a "*torrent of delights.*"—(II. Cor. iv: 17.)

The object of their glory is God Himself. God, the inexhaustible source of all felicity, the essence of all perfection. He fills their intellect with the brightness of His light, their will with the abundance of His peace, all their faculties with the immensity of His goods. They see, they love, they praise Him, they see the first Beauty, and its sight enraptures them; they love the essential Goodness, and this fills up their hearts. . . . The enjoyment is without alloy, it is an inheritance which shall never be contested. They praise God, and the canticles which express their joy, their admiration, their gratitude and their love, shall last for all eternity, like the sentiments which in inspire them. O city of God, habitation of the saints, where everything abideth, and nothing passes away, where everything is found, and nothing is wanting, where everything is quiet and sweet, without any mixture of agitation or bitterness! O heaved so beautiful, I can not comprehend thee, but I can deserve to enter thee! O my soul, hear Jesus saying to thee at this moment: "*Fili, non te frangant labores quos assumpsisti propter me, nec tribulationes te dejiciant usquequaque; sed mea promissio in omni eventu te roboret et consoletur. . . . Leva faciem tuam in cœlum; ecce, ego et omnes sancti mei mecum, qui in hoc sæculo magnum habuere certamen; modo gaudent, modo consolantur, modo securi sunt; modo requiescunt, et sine fine mecum in regno Patris mei permanebunt.*"—(Imit. l. iii, c. 47.)

2d Point. *The examples of the saints show us the way to heaven, and remove imaginary difficulties.* They have followed the right road since they have reached the happy goal. Let us consider the thought of Bourdaloue. What is a saint? A saint is a real, visible, palpable and substantial idea of evangelical perfection. When God shows us a saint, He seems to say to us as He said to Moses, when showing him the image of the tabernacle: *Inspice, et fac secundum exemplar.* Behold this living portrait; this is what you ought to be. The example of this elect will teach you what you owe to your God, to your neighbor,

to yourself: *Inspice et fac.* The life of a saint is a lesson which every one can understand. Whilst it enlightens us, it also excites our courage by dissipating our allusions and our vain fears.

Illusion concerning the nature of true merit. We are to imagine that there is no great virtue, save in some extraordinary gift, the gift of contemplation, the gift of tears. . . . But many saints never received any such favor. To some they appeared more to be feared than to be desired. St. Bernard used to exclaim: Less of unction, O Lord, and more of strength in my trials; less of attractions and more of charity; less of spiritual delights and more of real fervor: *Eis contentus ero, cætera derelinquo!* St. Francis Xavier was grieved interiorly over the abundance of his consolations: *Satis est, Domine, satis est.*

Illusion concerning that which gives value to our works. Is it renown? Countless numbers of saints never performed but the commonest actions. What did Mary do? The King of saints Himself did not do anything remarkable during almost the whole time that He lived among men. Amongst those whom we behold sitting upon thrones in heaven, there are many who lived like hermits in the midst of the world, or full of zeal for the faith, though they crossed no seas to preach it; devoted to penitence, although they did not wear its frightful apparel.

Illusions concerning the obstacles they imagine they see in the way to sanctity, viz.: Violent passions, strengthened by repeated short-comings. Were the elect of God without passions? Were they not heard to complain that the flesh rebelled in them against the spirit? "*Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*"—Rom. vii: 24.) Strong passions well governed have made the great saints. The glory which they enjoy, we measure by the victories which they gained. We, therefore, confess that they had to fight as well as ourselves. As to our relapses, and the force of habit which results from them; were there not illustrious saints who were once well-known sinners? Their example shall always demonstrate to evidence that it is not impossible to become a saint, nay that holiness can be obtained easily with the help of God's grace, which is never wanting, and that there are found in it joys as real and infinitely more pure than the joys of the world. Finally, those glorious friends of God who en-

courage us by their examples, are also powerful protectors. To all the saints we may apply what St. Bernard said of one of them : "*In terris visus est, ut esset exemplo, in cœlum levatus est, ut sit patrocinio.*"—(Ser. 2 de Sanc. Vict.)

3d Point. *The saints help us powerfully by their prayers.* They pray for us. It is a dogma of our faith, and their intercession contributes powerfully toward our sanctification. We pray according to the desires of our hearts, and these are, at times, unjust or contrary to the will of God ; we do not ask for the grace which would obtain for us the sovereign good. But the saints see our real interests in the light of God, and they ask for nothing but what is useful to our welfare. Their prayers are efficacious, for each of them is offered in conformity with His designs.

The prayer of a saint is, moreover, much more powerful in itself than all our prayers, for the dignity of the person who prays enhances the merit of the prayer. This prayer is offered with greater purity, being entirely free from selfish motives ; with greater attention, because of the sight of God which they enjoy, and with immense fervor, because of their admirable charity.

It is true, therefore, that the saints, in the midst of their triumph, forget not our miseries. As much are they secure in the possession of their own happiness, so much are they solicitous with regard to our salvation : *Jam de sua immortalitate securi, et de nostra salute solliciti.* How great should not be my joy and confidence when I say to myself : All the saints of heaven are my devoted friends, and have all power with God, for the power He has given them to assist me, is a considerable part of their reward. All of them offer to me the benefit of their prayers. If I be so willing, the apostles shall obtain for me zeal, the martyrs shall obtain strength, the doctors light, and the virgins spotless purity. . . . They ask of me in return to think on them, especially in the oblation of the holy sacrifice, returning thanks with them and for them, to Him who crowned His own gifts when He crowned their merits : *Ut illis proficiat ad honorem, nobis autem ad salutem : et illi pro nobis intercedere dignentur in cœlis, quorum memoriam agimus in terris.* Let us love to repeat, principally to-day and during the whole octave, the following prayer : *Sancta Maria et omnes*

Sancti intercedant pro nobis ad Dominum: ut nos mereamur ab eo adjuvari et salvari, qui vivit et regnat in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

1st Point. *The happiness of the saints gives us a presentiment of our own, and inflames our desires.* Heaven has been conquered for us. The blood of Jesus Christ gives us an incontestable right to it. All we have to do is to take possession of it. Let us contemplate leisurely the admirable society of the elect. They see, they love, they praise God, and their canticles of joy shall last for all eternity, like the sentiments which inspire them. . . . O heaven I can not comprehend thy beauty; but I can possess thee if I only wish to do so.

2d Point. *The example of the saints shows us the way to heaven, and removes imaginary difficulties.* The life of a saint is a lesson intelligible to all. It enlightens us and does away with our illusions. I. Regarding the nature of real merit. It does not consist in extraordinary favors; there were many saints who seemed rather to fear than to desire them. II. Relating to that which lends value to our works. In the lives of the greater part of the saints, there were none but the commonest actions. III. Relating to the obstacles to holiness which we imagine we find within ourselves. The saints also had passions. Many of them were great sinners for some time.

3d Point. *The intercession of the saints helps us to attain that happiness which they enjoy.* They pray for us, and their intercession is more powerful than our own prayers. They see our real interests in the light of God; they ask Him to grant us that which is for our spiritual welfare. This personal dignity gives more efficacy to their prayers, which are free from all selfish motives. How great should be my joy and confidence when I say to myself: All the saints of heaven are my devoted friends, whose power with God is very great. Let us congratulate them over their happiness, let us deserve to share in it with them by invoking and striving to imitate them.

CXXXVIII. MEDITATION.

NOVEMBER 2d—COMMEMORATION OF ALL SOULS—HELPING THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

The Imitation of Christ says, that we do not long remember those whom we no longer see. The greater number of the departed would soon be entirely forgotten had not the Church instituted this funeral solemnity to recall them all to our memory. *Commemoratio omnium fidelium defunctorum.* Devotion toward assisting and delivering the souls in purgatory, is grouuded upon one of the most consoling dogmas of our faith, the communion of saints. The good priest practices it earnestly, and propagates it zealously. For the living he cannot do as much good as he would; and, as a compensation, he remembers the departed souls, for in their case, the exercise of his charity finds no opposition.

1st.—THE SOULS IN PURGATORY DESERVE OUR COMPASSION.

2d.—WE CAN EASILY ASSIST OR DELIVER THE SUFFERING SOULS IN PURGATORY.

1st Point. *The souls in Purgatory deserve our compassion.*

I. For whom does the Church, especially on this day, solicit our commiseration, by appealing to our faith and to our memory? *Commemoratio?* It is in behalf of those holy souls whose possession of God's eternal kingdom is already assured. Although God treats them as an inexorable judge, they are patient and resigned; they bless Him as the most tender of Fathers, they acknowledge that they have fully deserved His chastisements. "*Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right.*" Those souls have moreover with us either natural or spiritual relations which demand that we should not remain insensible to their

sufferings. Are there not in this sombre dwelling place at least some members of our flock, children of our family, penitents who confessed their sins to us? Who knows but we are not entire strangers to the cause of their sorrows? Is it not true that their infidelities would have been fewer, that they would have perhaps obtained full remission of all their indebtedness, if our zeal had been more active and vigilant?

II. What do they now suffer? Privation of the presence of God, the torment of fire. Noble and holy victims who would not have compassion for you in your sufferings?

In order to have some idea of the first of these two pains, let us consider that the privation of a good, is by so much the more painful, that the good itself is more excellent, better known, that our rights to it are more incontestible, and that we are led to desire its possession by a stronger inclination. The good of which the souls in Purgatory are deprived is God Himself, the centre and plenitude of all good; God whom they have a right to possess in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ. They had seen Him in His beauty, and to their love of Him no love of earth can be compared. Who shall comprehend with what vehemence they thirst after Him; how intense their sufferings for being repelled by Him? Love, joined to the beautiful vision which in heaven constitutes the chief happiness of the elect, is in Purgatory the torment of the souls therein detained. Everything which here on earth weakens the attraction of a soul toward God, its beginning and its end, has now disappeared, and it now longs to possess Him with an ardor which imagination cannot conceive.

When we recite the office of the dead, we fancy that we hear the moanings of those poor souls drawn upward toward God by all the weight of their love, and rejected by Him, as unworthy to stand in His presence. At times it is to Himself that they address their sighs and their wailings: "*As the heart sighs after the fountains of water, so does my soul sigh after Thee, O Lord.*"—(Ps. xli: 2.)—"*Where are Thy ancient mercies?*"—(Ps. lxxxviii: 50.)—"*I cry to Thee and Thou hearest me not. I stand up and Thou dost not regard. Thou art changed to be cruel toward me and in the hardness of Thy hand Thou art against me.*"—(Job xxx: 20, 21.) At other times they deplore the long duration of their exile. "*Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged.*"—(Ps. cxix: 5.)—"*When shall I come and appear before Thy*

face?"—(Ps. xli: 3.) Often it is to themselves that they address a bitter reproaches. *Where is Thy God*, O senseless soul? Why dost thou not enjoy His felicity? Had I only been vigilant over myself, had I offered the light sacrifices that were demanded of me, I should have escaped this dreadful misfortune! . . . Ah, how dearly I now have to suffer for my tepedity and sluggishness, since they deprive me of the possession of my God!

To the torment of this privation there is added the punishment of fire. Concerning the nature of this fire and the sufferings which it causes, let us meditate on the language of the fathers. To the question regarding the nature of the fire of purgatory, St. Thomas answers: "*Idem est ignis qui damnatos cruciat in inferno, et qui justos in purgatorio purgat.*"—(In. quart. dis. 20.) St. Antoine answers the same question as follows: *Idem ignis in substantia cruciat purgandos et damnatos: sed primos ad tempus, secundos in perpetuum.* And St. Gregory declares as follows: *Illum transitorium ignem, omni tribulatione æstimo præsenti intolerabiliorem.* St. Augustine expresses the same sentiment in words still more emphatic: *Dicet aliquis: non pertinet ad me quamdiu moras habeam, si tamen ad vitam æternam perrexero. Nemo hoc dicat, carissimi, quia ille purgatorius ignis durior est quam quidquid potest in hoc sæculo pœnarum videri, aut cogitari, aut sentiri.* St. Thomas goes as far as to say: *Minima pœna purgatorii major est maxima pœna hujus mundi.*

III. The souls in Purgatory, in their extreme destitution, have no other hope, save in us. The poor man puts an end to his indigence by working; if he cannot work, he goes and begs; and the sad picture he makes of his destitution moves others to compassion for him. With regard to all the other unfortunates, the case is the same. Some resource is always left to them, and at last the surest ground of hope is prayer to God who never rejects it; but to the souls in purgatory every thing is wanting, if our charity will not remember them. For them there is no Divine mercy, its reign is ended. The whole of the debt is now to be paid, *to the last farthing.* They do not sow in the other world; the day is ended, and it is succeeded by the night, "*in which no man can work.*"—(J. ix: 4.) What of the companions of their misfortune? They are all equally powerless to assist one another. To us alone it would be useful for them to make known their distress; but alas, we

can neither see their tears hor hear their lamentations. Let us at least hear the language which the Church puts upon their lips on this day and if we feel any compassion whilst meditating on them, let us not harden our hearts. "*Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, ye at least, my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me.*"—(Job xix. 21.) Shall we through our negligence and indifference, be as severe in their regard, as the just God who chastises them? "*Why do you persecute me as God?*"—(Ib.)

2d Point. *We can easily help and deliver the souls of purgatory. We can.* It is an article of faith. We cannot, says the Roman catechism, be sufficiently thankful for the goodness of the Lord, who has given power to men to mutually atone for one another and thus repay what is due Divine justice. This we can do easily, for the Church provides us with means to do so, which are as multiplied as they are easily employed. They are principally the sacrifice of the Mass, prayer, alms, deeds and indulgences.

We have at the altar the most powerful means of helping the souls in purgatory. The Council of Trent has defined.—(Ses. xxv.) "That there is a purgatory and that the souls which are detained there are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, but above all by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar." "It was not in vain," says St. John Chrysostom, "that the apostles recommended a particular mention to be made of the souls departed, at the very moment when the adorable victim is immolated; they knew that they had a great part in the fruits of this immolation." Holy Mass, has in fact an infinite value. It is the blood of Jesus Christ that speaks there and asks for justice and mercy. It asks for justice for the Savior, for He merely claims the price of His sufferings. It asks for mercy for those captive souls, for He has a right to apply His merits to them. . . . St. Monica, being about to die, said, speaking of her burial: "Be not concerned with regard to my body; do with it what you like; all that I ask of you is that you remember me at the altar of the Lord."—(Conf.)

Under the name *prayer*, we are to understand the different exercises of piety practiced for the repose of the souls in purgatory; and under that of *alms*, we understand works of mercy, assistance of the poor, visiting the sick . . . those also which relate to penance, fastings, mortifications. . . . In the application of indulgences, we draw

from the treasures of the Church for the benefit of the faithful departed and we communicate to them the superabundant merits of Jesus Christ and of the saints. There is nothing so easy as to comply with the conditions to which are annexed the greater part of those priceless favors.

Be Thou blessed, O Jesus, for confiding to us, in Thy goodness, the power of assisting and delivering those blessed souls which, on so many accounts, are entitled to our compassion! How sweet it is to wipe away their tears and to become their benefactors! For them do we offer Thee whatever we shall do and suffer to the end of our life. To-day, especially, O my God, pour down streams of Thy precious blood upon those purging flames. Thou hast promised to hear the prayers of Thy people. Listen to the supplication which is offered Thee to-day in all Thy temples. *Pie Jesu, Domine, dona eis requiem.*

1st Point. *The souls in purgatory deserve our compassion.* I. They are holy souls destined for heaven. They bless God whose justice they adore. They are not strangers to us. We are united to them by many ties. II. Their sufferings cannot be imagined. *Privation* of the possession of God; and Him they know, Him they love infinitely more than He is loved on earth. Torment of fire. St. Thomas says that this fire is the same as that of hell. III. Everything is wanting to these souls, if we will not assist them. The Church calls our attention to their lamentations and their prayers; will we remain insensible to their sufferings?

2d Point. *We can easily help and deliver the souls in purgatory.* The principal means is the sacrifice of the Mass. This is the teachings of the Council of Trent. By prayer, alms, deeds, and by different works of mercy and penance, but especially by the application of indulgences, we can alleviate their sufferings and hasten the time of their entrance into heaven: *Pie Jesu, Domine, dona eis requiem.*

CXXXIX. MEDITATION.

DEVOTION TOWARD THE SOULS IN PURGATORY—CONTINUED.

1st.—THIS DEVOTION IS MOST PLEASING TO GOD.

2d.—MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THOSE WHO PRACTICE IT.

1st Point. *Devotion toward helping and delivering the souls in purgatory is most pleasing to heaven.* It pleases God, not merely because of the fraternal charity which he sees in us, and which is so well practiced by this devotion, but also on account of the glory which it procures to Him. It glorified His providence, which in this manner has so well seen to the good of all His children, to the good of the dead through the living, and to that of the living through the dead, who shall become in heaven their zealous intercessors. It glorifies His sanctity, of which purgatory gives us a sublime idea; His justice, which in this manner receives a full satisfaction through the application of the merits of the Redeemer; but above all it glorifies His goodness, His mercy, and His love, which shine so conspicuously in this devotion, and which, of all His attributes, are those which He most loves to make known. Let us, on this subject, meditate on the solid reflections of Bourdaloue, of which we give the substance:

To neglect devotion toward the dead, is to have no zeal for Almighty God, who, finding His glory in the deliverance of those souls, wishes to obtain it for Himself through our action, and can justly impute it to us if He receive it not. We admire those apostolic men who cross the seas and go into barbarous countries to convert the souls of infidels to their God. . . . But we should know that devotion toward the souls in purgatory is a kind of zeal, which, considered in its object, is equal to that which labors for the conversion of infidels; nay, it surpasses it in a manner, for those souls being holy, predestined, confirmed in grace, are unquestionably more noble before God, more beloved by Him, and in a fitter condition to glorify Him than the souls of the

heathen. He adds that purgatory is a state of violence, not merely for the suffering souls therein, but for God Himself, and he shows it in this way: God, in purgatory sees souls that He sincerely loves, but to which, however, He can do no good; He sees therein souls full of merits, of virtues and holiness, which He cannot reward as yet; nay, which He is bound to punish. Is there anything so much opposed to the inclinations of God, who is so charitable and so merciful? . . . It behooves us then to put an end to this violent state by delivering those souls from their prison and opening to them the gates of heaven. God has, in a manner, tied His own hands; we untie them for Him. . . . He says not to us as to Moses: "*Let Me alone, that My wrath may be kindled against them.*"—(Ex. xxvii: 14.) He says to us, on the contrary: Oppose My revenge; suffer not souls which I love and which you also should love, to remain victims of My anger. Well, what shall we do? Shall we leave God under the dire necessity to punish those whom He is impatient to reward? Shall we not rather respond to His desires?

The least alleviation which we obtain for the souls in purgatory, causes also an increase of glory for the humanity of Jesus Christ, through the honor which is rendered to His precious blood, since it is in view of its merits that this alleviation is granted. The sooner they come out of their sorrowful dwelling, the sooner does the Savior gather up the last fruit of all He had done and endured for their salvation; up to that time they had not yet participated in the Redemption, according to the full measure allotted to them. Mary, the mother of mercy, the consoler of the afflicted, the guardian angels of the departed souls, the saints who are their protectors and patrons, all the court of heaven, which rejoices over the conversion of one sinner, rejoices much more when a soul makes its entrance into the eternal kingdom. O priest, be ever faithful to practice a devotion so agreeable to God, and to all the friends of God.

2d Point. *This devotion is most advantageous to ourselves.*

I. This devotion, when it is well understood, is a perfect exercise of the theological virtues, faith, hope and charity. It is an exercise of faith, since by this devotion we enter an invisible world, and labor for it with as much energy and conviction as if it were open to our eyes. . . . We show forth our faith in the communion of saints, the effi-

cacy of the holy sacrifice, the power of the Church to dispense the superabundant merits of which she is the guardian. We exercise the virtue of hope, being convinced that these suffering souls shall receive the benedictions merited by the Savior's precious blood, and that we shall be rewarded for our zeal in helping them. If I offer up my deeds of atonement for their benefit, instead of reserving them for myself, would not that be a heroic act of the virtue of hope? In this devotion we practice charity, not only toward brethren, but toward God; we love them because He loves them, we promote their deliverance in order to augment His glory.

In this devotion, according to St. Francis de Sales, we find all the works of mercy recommended in the Scriptures, alms giving, the care of the sick, visiting the prisoners. We, indeed, through our piety toward the dead, appease the hunger and quench the thirst of those souls impatient of seeing God and of possessing Him. When we pay their debts with our own satisfactions, we, as it were, despoil ourselves, in order to clothe them with immortal glory; we free them from a captivity harder than death; we take in those who are strangers, and heaven is the place where we give them hospitality. . . . When the day shall have come on which Jesus, our judge, shall ask the question: I was hungry, did you give Me to eat? I was sick, or in prison, did you visit Me? . . . Blessed shall be the Christian, blessed shall be the priest who will hear a multitude of souls taking up his defence and answering for him: Yes, O Lord, all this did this man do; we were Thy suffering members in purgatory. He went dow thither, and to Thyself it was that he rendered all the good services which we received at his hands.

II. Let us also think on the source of graces which this devotion opens to us. God has promised to regulate His mercy according to ours, and to pour down His gifts abundantly in the bosom of him who assists his indigent brother. Were it possible for Him to forget this promise, He would be reminded of it by those captives whose chains we have broken, and whose gratitude shall be for us a sure and powerful resource, either in life or death, in any difficult situation. "*A faithful friend is a strong defence.*"—(Eccle. vi:14.) When Joseph had foretold to the butler of the king of Egypt that he would soon be restored to his office, he besought him to remember him and to intercede for him

before Pharaoh. The request was useless, Joseph was forgotten; it shall not be so with us if we free our brethren from the prison of purgatory. Those blessed souls shall ever consider us as their benefactors, however slight may be the assistance we may be able to afford them.

They shall ask and obtain for us everything which shall be really useful or necessary for our welfare. Were we on the point of death, in imminent danger to lose our souls, they would pray for us so earnestly that God would cease to be angry. Jonathan, after saving the army of Israel, is condemned to death for transgressing the commandment of his father. Thousands of voices cry out in his behalf: "*Shall Jonathan then die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel?*"—(I. Reg. xiv: 45.) Saul could not resist; he forgave his son. In like manner souls delivered by me from purgatory would, if necessary, intercede with God for me. They would exclaim: Wilt Thou permit, O Lord, the loss of him who consoled us in our profound affliction? Wilt Thou refuse to show mercy to him who practiced so much mercy toward us? *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.* True piety toward the departed is a pledge of predestination; the more so that it contributes also to sanctify us, through the holy reflections which it suggests.

III. When we apply ourselves to help the departed souls, we learn to fear Divine justice, more perhaps than in meditating on hell. In hell God is terrible; but who are they whom He punishes in His wrath? They are obstinate enemies who resisted to the end the advances of His grace; sinners who shall ever remain such. In purgatory, He sees just souls which left the world in the state of grace, souls expected in heaven, who, far from murmuring against God who punishes them, bless and adore their Savior instead. Their pains do not diminish their love; God on His part, loves them tenderly; but yet how severely does He not treat them? And what does He punish in those souls? *Quis non timebit te, O rex gentium?* If I obey the grace which accompanies such reflection, I fly from evil, and from the very shadow of evil; I ardently embrace the practice of penance, being convinced that God would punish in me, that which I should not have punished myself, and that the satisfaction which I offer to God on earth, bears no comparison with that which God would exert in revenge of my crimes. O my soul! Let us follow the advice of St. Augustine: *Studeat ergo quisque sic delicta corrigere, ut post mortem non oporteat pœnam tolerare.* Let us repeat with him:

In hac vita purges me, et talem me reddas cui jam emendatorio igne non opus sit.

1st Point. *Devotion toward the souls in purgatory is most pleasing to God.* It glorifies His providence, His sanctity, His justice, but above all His mercy. With regard to its object, it is a kind of zeal equal to zeal for the conversion of heathens, and it, in a manner, surpasses it. God says not to us as He said to Moses: *Let Me alone that My wrath may be kindled against*, but He seems to say: Save Me from the obligation of punishing souls which are dear to Me. Mary, the angels, the saints, all the court of heaven, rejoice when they are freed from their captivity.

2d Point. *This devotion is most advantageous to ourselves.* I. Through it we exercise, in an excellent manner, the virtues of faith, hope and charity. In this devotion, according to St. Francis de Sales, we find united all the works of mercy so strongly recommended in the Gospel, alms giving, visiting the prisoners, taking care of the sick, etc. II. It is for us a source of most abundant graces. God has promised to deal out His mercy to us in the same measure that we have been merciful to others. Will those forget us in heaven whose entrance into it we shall have hastened by our charity? III. Whilst occupied in assisting the departed, we learn to fear the justice of God, to abstain from the very appearance of evil, to punish in ourselves, without delay, the sins which God would otherwise punish so rigorously in the flames of purgatory.

CXL. MEDITATION.

NOVEMBER 21st—THE PRESENTATION OF THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN—RENEWAL OF THE CLERICAL VOWS.—"*Beware lest thou ever forget the covenant of the Lord Thy God, which He hath made with Thee.*" —(Deut. iv : 23.)

1st.—JESUS CHRIST GIVING HIMSELF TO THE PRIEST, TO BE THE PORTION OF HIS INHERITANCE.

2d.—THE GOOD PRIEST RENEWING THE OFFERING HE MADE OF HIMSELF TO JESUS CHRIST.

1st Point. *Jesus Christ giving Himself to the priest to be the portion of his inheritance.* The Savior is the treasure of all the faithful; but in a special manner is He the treasure of His ministers? Have I sufficiently considered this prerogative of the Christian and of the priest?

I. It is certain that all Christians possess sacred claims on our Lord Jesus Christ. Every Christian is entitled to say, in the most consoling sense, the Savior is mine. The Father gave Him to me; He gave Himself, I took possession of Him by baptism. By faith I can enjoy Him. This magnificent donation of God to men had been foretold by the prophets.—(Is. ix : 6.) Proclaimed by the angels on the day of the Savior's nativity.—(L. ii : 11.) Marked out in the Gospel, announced to the whole world, through the apostles and their successors. The Church makes it the subject of her sweetest and most solemn canticles. *Nobis datus, nobis natus.—Se nascens dedit socium, convescens in edulium, se moriens in pretium, se regnans dat in præmium.* Who can question a truth grounded upon such evidence?

O Christians, Jesus is yours! What else can you desire, if you know how to appreciate your happiness? The tears which He shed, the penance which He performed, the death which He suffered, His virtues, His merits, all that Jesus Christ has is yours, and you can in some

measure say to Him, as He said to His Father: *All things that are Thine, are mine.* Accept readily a gift which contains all the other gifts, employ it for the end for which it was given you, "*that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish but may have life everlasting.*"—(J. iii: 16.) Unite yourself to Jesus Christ by faith, hope and charity. Offer Him to God as an immense supplement for all that is wanting to you; offer His infinitely pure life to conceal and blot out your iniquities, His virtues in place of your vices, His heart, burning with charity, in place of your tepid, languishing heart. . . . In Him and through Him you shall fulfill all justice.

II. But if Jesus Christ be mine as a Christian, is He not much more eminently mine as a priest? The Lord had said to the sons of Levi: You shall have no portion among your brethren. "*I am Thy portion and inheritance in the midst of the children of Israel.*"—(Num. xviii: 20.) That which was merely a figure for the former priesthood, is an admirable reality for the second. O words which no human lips should have dared pronounce if truth itself had not authorized us to do so! *The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup.* God Himself is my portion, my rich inheritance! That share which He would not give me among the children of the world, because it was unworthy of His munificence and of the heavenly ministry to which He called me, He gives me every day in the real, personal, substantial possession of Himself. Is not Jesus Christ wholly mine, when I come down from the altar?

When I reflect on the rank He deigned to assign to me in His Church, on the functions which I fulfill therein, I understand why the sacerdotal tribe alone has the privilege of appropriating to itself the admirable anthem: "*The Lord is the portion of my inheritance.*" From the moment that I am a priest, Jesus is mine in such a manner that I can give Him and dispose of Him as I please. Not only is He mine, but He is within me distributing His graces, exercising His powers, continuing His work of redemption. He willed that my voice should be acknowledged to be His. *He that heareth you, heareth me,* and to fail in respect toward me would be an outrage to Him. *He that despiseth you, despiseth me.* Every priest is a Divine man, working wonders reserved to the Divinity. See what He does in the confessional, at the altar! O the rich endowment of the Catholic priesthood!

It is true that between Jesus Christ and the ministers there is reciprocity of obligations. He is all mine on condition that I shall be also all His. In entering the holy militia I have renounced not only the share of goods, pleasures and honors which the world could promise to me, but I have renounced my liberty, my tastes, my love of self, and the character which has conferred on me the astonishing power of offering up God as a victim to His Father, has made a victim of myself. The priest dies and, as it were, is buried with the Savior in a new baptism. He is dead to the world, to the passions which trouble, the fears which agitate, the hopes which deceive it. . . . A death truly precious in the sight of the Lord, since it is the death of His saints. "*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.*"—(cxv : 15.) It gives us a life hidden to the eyes of the world, the life of the spirit of God, the life of faith, adorned with all the virtues. It makes us the living images of Jesus Christ. "*For you are dead and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*"—(Col. iii : 3.) Such should I have been, since the time that I belong to the Son of God, as His minister. Such a one I was to a certain extent, at the beginning of my sacerdotal career. . . . But alas, how easy it is to allow our first fervor to relent, and on this account St. Paul recommended Timothy to stir up the grace which he had received by the imposition of hands—(II. Tim. i : 6.) This also I am invited to do by the solemnity of this day and the touching example of the virgin, given to the clergy for their queen, their model, and their mother.

2d Point. *The good priest renewing the offering which he made of himself to Jesus Christ.* Mary, at this time so young, went not to the temple to consecrate herself to God. Her irrevocable consecration dated from the moment of her immaculate conception ; she went not to the temple to give herself to God, but to present herself to the Lord and to acknowledge, by an exterior and solemn act, that He had entire domain over her. She went to offer herself anew for the accomplishment of His designs ; and this is what the good priest endeavors to imitate on this day. He knows well that he does not belong to himself any longer, and as he is a prist forever, so he has given himself to Jesus Christ forever. He then on this day recalls to mind the mercies of the Lord toward him, and as an evidence of his gratitude, he confirms the obligations he had contracted, by renewing them.

I. The life of the most blessed virgin was naught, we may say, but a continued thanksgiving. The sentiment which inspired her with the sublime canticle: *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*, is the same which directs her childish steps toward the holy temple. The Almighty had prepared her for great things; but how great already was the miracle of love wrought in her immaculate conception: *Fecit mihi magna qui potens est.* She feels the more grateful for the blessings of God, as she thinks herself the more unworthy of them. *Quia respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ.* O priest, will you be ungrateful? You have not chosen the Lord, but the Lord has chosen you. With what a noble mission He has associated you? *As the living Father has sent me, so I send you.* He has willed to make you the companion of His labors in this world, where everything passes away so rapidly, that He may make you a partaker of His glory in that kingdom where everything is unchangeable and permanent. Strive, therefore, to find with the Prophet King, what you might return to Him who hath given to you everything. "*What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He has rendered to me?*"—(cxv: 12.) Answer as he did: "*I will pray my vows to the Lord.*"—(Ib.)

II. Contemplate Mary prostrate before the altar on the day of her presentation and consider that her secrifice was prompt, generous and lasting.—It is in the most tender age that she goes and presents herself to God. Other children had been presented to God early in life, but by their parents. The singular glory of Mary consists in this, that she offered herself without any impulse save that of her own heart. Grieve over the time you may have lost and make up for it by the fervent renewal of your obligations. To-day, at least, let your dispositions be those of David when he exclaimed: "*And I said, now have I begun.*"—(Ps. lxxvi: 11.) Hundreds of times, O my God, did I repel or neglect Thy grace! . . . I at last listen to its voice. Often had I said it before and never fulfilled my promise; I say it now and will execute it. . . . Her sacrifice was generous. She renounces the most flattering and legitimate hopes; she renounces everything in order to belong more completely to her God, and this offering she makes joyfully, in the simplicity of her heart. We fancy we hear her glorious ancestor repeating the words; "*I know my God, that Thou provest hearts and lovest simplicity, wherefore I, also, in the simplicity of my heart, have joyfully offered all these things.*—(I. Par. xxix: 17.) Mary's offering is irrevo-

cable. With inviolable fidelity, she keeps what she has promised. Her first sacrifice continues and is confirmed by new acts of consecration and of offering of herself. . . . She will rise from virtue to virtue, from perfection to perfection, to such a height that her sanctity and glory shall be lost and absorbed in the glory and sanctity of God Himself.

Ah Lord, I am too conscious of my own inconstancy to rely upon my most sincere resolutions ; but I address myself to Thee who holdest all hearts in Thy hand. Strengthen me fixedly in the resolution which I now take. Proportion Thy assistance to my weakness ; sustain me in my trials ; grant that I may come out of all my combats with an increase of strength and courage. O God, hear what I will now say : O Mary, let thy protection be the security and keeping of my promises. Not my mouth alone, but also my heart, my whole soul, all there is in me of power and of life, is about to pronounce this profession of my faith, this protestation of my devotion, this acknowledgment of my duties, this sacred form of my rights and hopes. "*The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup ; it is Thou that wilt restore my inheritance to me.*"—(Ps. xv: 5.)

1st Point. *Jesus Christ giving Himself to the priest to be the portion of his inheritance.* The Savior is the treasure of all the faithful, but particularly of His ministers. I. Every Christian can justly say : Jesus Christ is mine, His Father gave Him to me ; He has given Himself : *Nobis datus, nobis natus.—Se nascens dedit socium.* II. But if as a Christian I possess Him, much more excellently do I possess Him as a priest. That which for the levitical priesthood was but a figure, is for ours an admirable reality. *I am Thy portion and inheritance in the midst of the children of Israel.* From the moment that I became a priest it has been in my power to give Jesus and do with Him as I would. He is mine, He is within me. *He who heareth you, heareth me.* But there is reciprocity of obligations between Jesus Christ and His minister.

2d Point. *The good priest renewing the offering he made of himself to Jesus Christ.* Mary goes not to the temple in order to give herself up to God ; this she did at the moment of her conception ; she goes

to the temple to present herself. This is what the priest does on this day. It is an act of gratitude in him, as it was in Mary,—Mary's sacrifice was prompt, generous and constant. In what manner shall I imitate her?

APPENDIX.

ON ECCLESIASTICAL RETREATS.

I. The spiritual exercises, commonly called retreats, are always substantially the same, whoever may be the persons conducting them, or whatever length of time may be devoted to them; there is no variation save in the forms. To make a retreat will always mean a withdrawal from worldly noise to meditation and silence, from mental agitation to tranquility, from human thoughts to Divine thoughts. A retreat will always mean a deep and serious reflection on the manner in which we may have spent at least a certain portion of our lives, with the all practical view to strive against, and overcome our evil inclinations, to reform what may be amiss in our conduct, and regulate our lives for the future on a plan conformable to the will of God. This holy will is to be known; it is to be embraced. We prepare ourselves for it by meditating on the eternal truths which enlighten, stimulate, purify us and disengage us from all things, that we may adhere to God alone; also by interior self-examination, by the study and contemplation of the mysteries of Jesus Christ.

II. The most indispensable condition for a good retreat is isolation, both exterior and interior, this latter being the most important of the two. We are never entirely "on retreat" except when perfectly disengaged from every foreign preoccupation. The further we remove from creatures, the nearer does God draw unto us. He loves to find alone that soul which He comes to visit in His great mercy. There are, however, exigencies of state, of position, of health, which do not permit all persons to equally withdraw from the world, or to remain separated from it for the same length of time. Hence there are for the Clergy three kinds of retreats, viz: general retreats, private retreats and those

which may be termed mixed retreats, which in some respects participate in the advantages of the two others.

III. The general retreat, is made in common under the presidency of the bishop, who every year invites a goodly number of his clergy, or even all, divided in two sections, to stir up the grace which is in them, by the imposition of the hands. "Those days are days of sweet repose after the battles of the Lord, and the fatigues of the apostolate. We have in a retreat a reunion of brethren assembled in the same house, having but one heart, under the direction of the chief, or rather of the father whom God has appointed to govern the family ; a blessed solitude in which the air is more pure, the light more vivid, God's presence more sweetly felt, and the heart better disposed to accept the emotions of faith and piety ; it is a spiritual bath, in which the guides of nations, those spiritual eagles, feel that the vigor of their youth is renewed ; a heavenly school at which all holy priests and pastors were formed to the practice of the virtues which make us pleasing to God, and useful to men."—(Mg'r. Giraud.)

Incalculable is the good that may and that really does result from those general retreats which so touchingly represent the apostolic college pressing about the person of Jesus Christ. In all of them we find united all the different kinds of graces and in the most favorable circumstances for insuring their efficacy. We need not, therefore, wonder to see that our venerable bishops, convinced as they are that this is a question of progress or decay, of life or death, use all their endeavors to regulate ecclesiastical retreats in their dioceses, and to make them obligatory, and that the good priests embrace the opportunity with alacrity and much edification. We must confess, however, that causes may occur which would much diminish, nay, entirely paralyze the good success of retreats, and we shall presently point out some of them.

IV. It has frequently been said that recollection is the soul of retreats. Nothing can be more true. With equal truth it may be declared that silence is the soul of recollection ; now there are obstacles to recollection found in those numerous reunions of a general retreat, occuring at stated times. Mg'r. Plantier, bishop of Nismes, points out in a discourse on this subject, three of those obstacles.

The first obstacle to silence comes from levity. One will talk be-

cause he has not courage to keep silence. Reflection does not enter either into his tastes or his habits ; nothing frightens him so much as the idea that he must draw near unto himself, and commune with God alone. He seeks out a brother priest, who, feeling the same reluctance as he does, experiences, like himself, as it were, a want to talk. When he has found him, they will know how to recreate each other, and to abridge, by frivolous conversations, days which to them would appear most tedious and endless if they were to be spent in continual recollection.

The meeting of friends is another obstacle to silence. They have been for a long time deprived of the company of a brother priest whom they love. . . . How many the secrets they have to communicate one to another ! . . . So many sad or happy events occurred in the pastoral house or in the parish ! So many occurrences in the Diocese, in the Church, in the political world ! It seems so enjoyable to interchange mutual impressions and appreciations on all those matters ! Behold a subject of dissipation, for the days of the retreat.

At other times, also, affairs of different kinds are a serious obstacle to recollection and silence. A priest may have difficulties in his parish ; he may have a law-suit on his hands, etc.; how shall he get out of those difficulties ? This is what he wants to find out during the retreat; this is the sole end he will have in view during these days of benediction.

If we will make a fruitful retreat, we must necessarily subject ourselves to the rules of the retreat, and especially to the rule of silence. As far as possible each priest should have his separate cell, to which he will retire in the interval of the exercises in order to meditate privately on the subject he shall have considered in common, in order to write down the inspirations and graces he shall have received, the resolutions he has taken, etc. It is also most desirable that all those who intend to follow the exercises should begin and end them together. To arrive on the second or third day of the retreat, or to withdraw before its termination, would be an injury to the general good and no profit to oneself.

V. An illusion of the most dangerous kind, and one which we think is very common, consists in bringing to the retreat a simply passive co-operation instead of an active one. We have in the following passage the opinion of St. Ignatius concerning spiritual exercises : *Si-*

cut deambulare, ire, currere sunt exercitio corporalia; ita etiam quilibet modus præparandi et disponendi animam ad tollendas a se omnes affectionnes inordinatas, et postquam quis eas sustulerit, ad quærendam et inveniendam voluntatem divinam, in vitæ suæ dispositione, ad salutem animæ, vocantur exercitia spiritualia; now, hear on this matter the remarks of an able commentator of the book composed in the grotto of Manresa: *Corporaliter exercetur, non qui alium ambulantem, euntem, currentem spectat vel audit, sed qui ipse ambulat, ipse it, ipse currit.*

To make a retreat, therefore, does not consist in listening with attention to him who exhorts, reflects, prays, contemplates aloud; but we ourselves must pray, reflect, and contemplate. One must *act*, must *exercise* himself. Let us hear another excellent master of spiritual life: "Those are mistaken who would always be reading, reciting vocal prayers, or hearing pious discourses; I grant that we may feel moved at times by a good reading, or the words of the preacher . . but it happens, also, that compunction disappears as soon as the book is closed, or as soon as the preacher is through, and that it never comes back but with the book or the instruction. . . . The silence of meditation should act for you the part of the book and of the pious instruction; it may happen, moreover, that whilst always learning, you will never acquire wisdom. Whence is it, alas! that there are so few contemplative souls even amongst learned priest and religious, nay, amongst the theologian, if it be not found in the almost insurmountable reluctance that we experience to find ourselves alone in the presence of ourselves, there to make deep and serious reflections and to apply them to the needs of our souls?"—(Gers.)

VI. The choice of the subjects to be treated of in our retreats should be conformable to the end we should have in view in following the exercises. This end, St. Vincent de Paul tells us, ought to be an entire renovation of ourselves. "He who makes the retreat well, passes into another state, he is no longer what he was before. In introducing us into this solitude where He wishes to speak to our heart (Os. ii: 4.), God says to each one of us, as He said to His prophet; "*Lo, I have set thee this day . . . to root up and to pull down, to make and to destroy, and to build, and to plant.*"—(Jer. i: 10.) Here, indeed, we shall find the fittest means to effectuate in us a radical change, such as He de-

mands of us who has led us to it; here we shall find all that is needed to destroy and to build, to root up and to plant. But amongst those means the most important no doubt is meditation on those energetical truths which move the soul to its very depths. To suppress the meditation on the last ends, death, judgment and hell, would be to destroy the retreat. We are much less wanting in the knowledge of our duties than in the sincere will to accomplish them. It is principally on the will that we ought to act.

VII. The good priest always receives joyfully the notice of the day on which the retreat will open, and the invitation to come and participate in its exercises. If, however, he be deprived of this advantage, he fails not, some time or other, to give up for a few days the cares of his ministry and to retire into solitude, in a seminary, in a community, at a brother priest's house, or in his own dwelling, and there, with the help of some good book, he attends privately to his pious exercises. God, who is ever found when sought in simplicity, blesses the efforts of such a priest. He gives him light, inspires him with holy desires and wise resolutions and raises him up toward heaven, in case he had lowered himself down too much toward earth.

VIII. Finally, there is a third class of retreats which we call mixed, which being neither precisely *general* nor *private*, have not the same advantages as those of the first class, and have more of them than private retreats. There are certain communities which generally and at stated times, admit to their houses ecclesiastics who wish to meet there together in order to go through the exercises in common. A director proposes the points of meditation, gives the introductory premonitions and advices, and, according to circumstances, delivers a conference or an exhortation and sometimes both the conference and the exhortation. We cannot too warmly recommend these retreats when they are possible. We do not find in them the same obstacles to recollection as in more numerous re-unions: and still there is there the edification of good example and the grace of God annexed to the hearing of His word.

For the use of these two last classes of retreats, and especially for the sake of those who go through the exercises privately, we have prepared the following tables :—

CHOICE OF SUBJECTS.

FOR THREE RETREATS OF SIX DAYS EACH.

FIRST RETREAT.

EVENING—JESUS CHRIST IN THE DESERT—LOVE OF THE RETREAT.

FIRST DAY.

1st Meditation.—The end of man.
2d Meditation.—The end of the priest compared with that of the lay-man.
Consideration or attentive lecture.—Means given to man to attain his end.
3d Meditation.—The thought of eternity.

SECOND DAY.

1st Meditation.—Sin punished.
2d Meditation.—Mortal sin in the priest. Its Nature.
Consideration.—Pride.
3d Meditation.—Hell. Every one should fear it.

THIRD DAY.

1st Meditation.—Death.
2d Meditation.—Preparation for death.
Consideration.—Tepidity in the priest.
3d Meditation.—The prodigal son.

FOURTH DAY.

1st Meditation.—The imitation of Jesus Christ. Its necessity.
2d Meditation.—Same subject continued.
Consideration.—Practice of the imitation of Jesus Christ.
3d Meditation.—Jesus Christ, model of perfect humility.

FIFTH DAY.

1st Meditation.—Jesus at Nazareth. Contemplation.
2d Meditation.—Mystery of the hidden life of Jesus Christ.
Consideration.—The breviary.
3d Meditation.—The two standards.

SIXTH DAY.

1st Meditation.—Meekness considered in the priest.
2d Meditation.—The mystery of the cross and sacerdotal zeal.
Consideration.—Discouragement.
3d Meditation.—Conformity to God's will. What the soul finds in it.

SECOND RETREAT.

FIRST DAY.

1st Meditation.—Development of the meditation on the end of man.
2d Meditation.—Dignity of the priesthood considered in its object.
Consideration.—Recollection.
3d Meditation.—Obligation of sanctity required of the priest in virtue of his functions.

SECOND DAY.

1st Meditation.—Mortal sin in the priest. Its effects.
2d Meditation.—Horror we should have of mortal sin.
Consideration.—Sad state of the priest who has no recollection.
3d Meditation.—Hell. No one should fear it so much as the priest.

THIRD DAY.

1st Meditation.—The lukewarm priest on his death bed.
2d Meditation.—The death of the good priest.
Consideration.—Loss of time.
3d Meditation.—Three touching effects of the mercy of God for sinners.

FOURTH DAY.

1st Meditation.—Imitation of Christ. Its advantages.
2d Meditation.—Imitation of Christ. Its advantages continued.
Consideration.—The spirit of sacrifice.
3d Meditation.—Humility. Its excellence.

FIFTH DAY.

1st Meditation.—Unreserved confidence in Providence.
2d Meditation.—The two standards, development of.
Consideration.—Activity and prudence in the exercise of zeal.
3d Meditation.—Motives of zeal for the salvation of souls.

SIXTH DAY.

1st Meditation.—Jesus Christ makes for us the sacrifice of His reputation.
2d Meditation.—Jesus Christ on the cross.
Consideration.—The sufferings of the apostolic man.
3d Meditation.—The love of God. Its motives.

THIRD RETREAT.

FIRST DAY.

1st Meditation.—Dignity of the priesthood considered in its powers.
2d Meditation.—Sanctity of the priesthood considered in its object.
Consideration.—How should the priest labor for his sanctification.
3d Meditation.—The priest sanctified at the altar.

SECOND DAY.

1st Meditation.—Venial sin.
2d Meditation.—Abuse of graces.
Consideration.—The spirit of faith.
3d Meditation.—The sin of Saint Peter.

THIRD DAY.

1st Meditation.—Particular judgment.
2d Meditation.—Hell. Application of the senses.
Consideration.—Parable of the barren fig tree.
3d Meditation.—Saint Peter. Model of Penance.

FOURTH DAY.

1st Meditation.—The kingdom of Christ.
2d Meditation.—Humility, motives of.
Consideration.—The spirit of poverty the treasure of the good priest.
3d Meditation.—The good priest sacrifices to God his dearest affections.

FIFTH DAY.

1st Meditation.—Vocation of the apostles.
2d Meditation.—Constancy of the sacerdotal zeal.
Consideration.—Care of the sick.
3d Meditation.—Lively zeal in the conversion of the Samaritan woman.

SIXTH DAY.

1st Meditation.—Jesus Christ the priest's friend.
2d Meditation.—The Eucharist, a bond of union between Jesus Christ and His ministers.
Consideration.—Confidence and joy.
3d Meditation.—The good priest in heaven.

PRACTICE OF THE MONTHLY RETREAT.

The good priest loves to enter a retreat as often as he can, for he knows by experience how sweet is the manna that nourishes the soul in the desert, and how important it is for him to reflect and to pray. As he devotes one week every year to the general retreat, so he also manages to devote to it one day in every month, and if on that day he can not entirely give up his occupations, he endeavors to spend it in so great a recollection, to attend so carefully to his pious exercises, that he finds himself renewed and strengthened in the resolutions of the general retreat.

The different methods published of late, in order to facilitate this excellent practice, are very much alike. We will substantially reproduce the method of R. P. de Lehen, S. J., in his book, "*The way of interior peace*," being careful to modify it in such a way as to make it especially adapted to the character of the reverend clergy, We have divided it into two sections : What should be done in the evening previous to this day of recollection, and what should be done on the day itself.

I.

ON THE EVENING PRECEDING THE DAY OF THE MONTHLY RETREAT.

Choose that day of the month on which you think you shall be more free, less occupied and distracted by exterior labors.

In the evening recite fervently the "*Veni Creator*," implore the special help of the most holy virgin, of your patron saint, of your guardian angel, and of the saints toward whom you feel more devotion, and then, if possible, make the following meditation :

MEDITATION PREPARATORY TO THE MONTHLY RETREAT.

First Prelude.—Recall to mind the healing of the blind man of Jericho. He falls down on his knees before the feet of Jesus, who says to him: "*What wilt thou that I should do to thee?*" The blind man answers: "*Good Master, that I may see.*" "*Go thy way,*" our Lord replies, "*thy faith hath made thee whole.*"—(Mar. x: 51, 52.) Hear Jesus Christ asking you the same question, and answer Him as did the blind man: "*O Lord, that I may see.*" Show me clearly during this retreat that which displeases Thee in my conduct, and what Thou expectest me to do.

Second Prelude.—Grant me, O Lord, to enter into the dispositions which Thou desirest of me, that I may accomplish all the designs of Thy mercy in this day of grace which Thou hast set apart for me.

1st Point. *Dispositions of holy desires.* Blessed would have been Jerusalem if she had known the value of the Lord's visit, on that day which He yet granted her, and which he called *this, thy day.* Blessed shalt thou be, O my soul, if thou wilt know how to appreciate the gift of God! How many losses thou canst repair, how many rich treasures thou canst acquire by the proper employment of this one day of recollection! Do I, at least, desire to know myself? Am I not somewhat afraid to see a light which would trouble and accuse my conscience? If I have the desire, I must seriously examine how I stand regarding the work of my sanctification. Have I advanced toward heaven? Have I moved backward toward hell? I should ask myself what fruit I have derived from the sacraments which I so often received, from all kinds of graces which were offered me. What victories have I gained over myself, the devil and the world? Should not I be justly terrified if I were to be judged at this very moment.

2d Point. *Dispositions of Confidence.* God presents Himself to me in His infinite mercy. I should have a just cause to be discouraged if I were alone with my sins and my weakness, but with God I can do everything. His grace is stronger than all the powers of hell together. It is all ready to be poured down in abundance upon me. I only have to ask. God continues to love me, notwithstanding my infidelities; of this I have an evidence in the invitation He addresses to me, to come and rest near Him in the silence of the retreat. I hear Him say:

Come into the solitude; I shall speak to thy heart. O my soul, Jesus calls thee; to thee He says also, as to the first companions of His labors: "*Come apart into a desert place and rest a little.*"—(Mar. vi: 31.) What kindness! What a source of confidence! Great as my sins are, I can and I must hope for everything from God.

3d Point. *Dispositions of generosity.* God will do for me during this retreat, what I shall do for Him. "*In what measure you shall mete, it shall be measured to you again.*"—(Mar. iv: 24.) "*He who soweth sparingly, shall also reap sparingly; and he who soweth in blessings, shall also reap in blessings.*"—(II. Cor. ix: 6.) If I give myself fully to Jesus Christ, I shall draw upon myself the benedictions of His love. I will, therefore, throw myself unreservedly within the arms of my Savior, as St. Paul did from the first instant of his conversion. "*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*"—(Acts ix: 6.) I shall say like Samuel: "*Speak, O Lord, for Thy servant heareth.*"—(I. Reg. iii: 10), and with holy king David: "*My heart is ready, O God, My heart is ready.*"—(Ps. lvi: 8.)

End your meditation as you began it, by this prayer, *Lord that I may see!* What I am, what I ought to be, what I can be, if I now respond to Thy grace, that I may see my soul as it really is, that I may see my sins, my weaknesses, and Thy mercies which are greater yet than my miseries. If you prefer it, appropriate to yourself the prayer of the Prophet King: "*Give me understanding and I shall live.*"—(Ps. cxvii: 144.) Give me, O God, the understanding of my nothingness in the sight of Thy greatness. . . . the understanding of my duties, and of the motives which demand of me to fulfill them faithfully. . . . I shall then live that life of faith which makes the just; my life shall be worthy of Thee and of the great mission Thou hast confided to me; it shall lead me to the blessed, to the eternal life. *Pater Ave.*

Before retiring to rest, prepare the meditation of the morrow and let its subject be one of the great truths of salvation, which you may select in the third or fourth paragraph of the first section. (Vol. I.)

II.

ON THE DAY OF THE RETREAT.

I. In the morning, on waking up, say to yourself : *I am on retreat.* Offer the day to God, and ask of Him grace to spend it holily. This would be a proper moment to recite the orison of Prime: *Domine, Deus omnipotens, qui ad principium hujus diei nos pervenire facisti,* etc.

II. Make with greatest care the meditation prepared on the evening previous, consecrating to it three-quarters of an hour, or even one whole hour, if you can do so, and make it according to all the rules laid down in the beginning of the first volume.

III. Celebrate holy Mass as you would celebrate it were you sure that this is the last time you will go up on the altar, and that the communion you are about to receive will be your viaticum. If you have any trouble of conscience, you should go to confession before beginning the holy sacrifice. During your thanksgiving, you should speak to Jesus Christ about your retreat, asking His pardon for your sins, and praying to Him to grant you the help you need, to correct yourself of your faults, to grow in sacerdotal holiness, and to spend well the forthcoming month. This should be the subject of all your conversations with the Lord during this day.

IV. Recite the holy office with a new spirit, as you were wont to say it immediately after receiving sub-deaconship. It was at that time with great fervor that you acquitted yourself of this obligation, and it then appeared so sweet to you !

V. In the same spirit of renewed fervor you should perform not only your spiritual exercises, such as the spiritual readings, visit to the Blessed Sacrament, but all the actions of the day, not excepting the commonest ones.

VI. In the afternoon consecrate at least one-half hour to a serious consideration or examination of the present state of your soul. It would be well to note down briefly in writing the result of that examination, so as to compare it with that of former or of future retreats.

VII. Toward evening make the preparation for death, and end this blessed day by reciting some canticle of thanksgiving, viz.: The *Te Deum; Magnificat; Benedic, anima mea, Domino.*

CONSIDERATION ON THE PRESENT STATE OF MY SOUL.

After imploring the light of the Holy Ghost, I shall examine, under the eyes of God, how I acquit myself of my more important obligations, what my dispositions are regarding God, my neighbor and the principal duties of my position.

I. *Order of the day and practices of piety.* Have I a rule of life, and do I observe it faithfully? Nothing is recommended more earnestly than this point, by those who have labored in a more special manner for the sanctification of the clergy. He who subjects himself to a rule, fulfills his obligations with greater facility, greater perfection, with more merit and constancy. Without a rule we lose time, and our life is a life of mere caprice. Have I made my meditation immediately after rising? Have I had for this fundamental exercise of the spiritual life, all the esteem which is due to it? How did I perform my other practices of piety, spiritual readings, the two examinations, the visit to the Blessed Sacrament? The Holy Mass. How have I been accustomed to prepare for it? Did I always celebrate it with a pure conscience, with a deep spirit of religion, with modesty, with precipitation, observing exactly all the rubrics? . . . Did I keep silence in the vestry, in putting on or while removing the sacred vestments? How did I fulfill the great duty of returning thanks after Mass?

The Divine office. Did I remember that I should recite it in the name of, and for the wants of the universal Church? "*Totius Ecclesiæ os et persona.*"—(St. Bern.) Did I recite it *attente, reverenter devote?* My confessions. Were they frequent enough? preceded by a suitable preparation, accompanied with sincere repentance, followed by some amendment?

II. *Habitual dispositions regarding God.* Am I zealous for the glory of God? Am I grieved on account of the outrages offered to Him? Have I myself for God that filial fear, that tenderness of conscience which causes the good priest to tremble at the sole appearance of sin? Did I not wilfully commit many sins under the pretext that they were simply venial? Did I not entirely lose the habit of walking under the

eyes of God? What is my submission to His adorable providence, my gratitude for His blessing, my attention to please Him? . . . Is it He whom I seek in my actions? Are my intentions ever entirely pure and often renewed? What love have I for our Lord Jesus Christ, what devotion for the august sacrament of our altars, for the blessed virgin, St. Joseph, my patron saint, my guardian angel?

III. *Dispositions regarding my neighbor.* To my superior I owe respect and obedience; have I nothing to reproach myself with in this point, either in my actions, words or feelings? Was there nothing in my conduct which led people to believe that I had forgotten my holy and solemn promise: *Promittis mihi et successoribus meis reverentiam et obedientiam? Promitto.* To my brother priests I owe respect, kindness, the most cordial affection. I should, by all means in my power, foster the union of hearts so desirable between the members of the clergy. . . . Did I not do or say anything contrary to it? Did I repel far from me this base jealousy which grieves because of the successes of others? Did I never criticise, judge rashly the conduct of my brother priests, reveal their failings when the most ordinary charity commanded me to hide them? To my neighbor, whoever he may be, I owe love, support, forgiveness. Have I not offended against him by detractions, calumnies, desires of revenge, outbreaks of ill humor? Regarding the souls which heaven has confided to me, I should be zealous, devoted, patient, invariably kind. . . . Have I labored indefatigably for the salvation of my people? Have I prayed for them with a fervor equal to the desire I should entertain for their happiness? Here I should consider the duties of the pastoral life, preaching, confessions, catechism. . . . I should think on the different classes of my parishioners, the children, the young, the old people, the sick, the just, the sinners. . . . Have I made myself all to all that I might gain all to Jesus Christ?

IV. *Care of my own perfection.* Have I labored seriously toward my spiritual advancement? *Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice.* Without this desire of perfection, without this *indefessum proficiendi studium*, this *jugis conatus ad perfectionem* of which St. Bernard speaks, relaxation becomes unavoidable, and it can lead us very far astray. What progress have I made in the Christian and sacerdotal virtues? Is my faith simple, lively, active? Is my hope firm

and humble, free from despondency and presumption? How do I love God? . . . . Is there not within my heart some attachment which, as it were, rends it in twain? Interest, ambition, too natural friendship, never fail to produce this unhappy effect. How did I practice the virtue of religion? This is pre-eminently the virtue of priests. Are my church and vestry kept in a proper state of cleanliness? Do the sacred vessels, the vestments, and everything used in Divine worship, bear witness to my profound respect for holy things? Am I grave, modest, recollected in the exercise of all my functions, and in particular at the altar, and in the administration of the sacraments? What are my dispositions regarding abnegation, the spirit of sacrifice, love of sufferings? Am I chaste of mind, of heart, of body? Have I always been saintly and timid in this matter? How did I watch over my imagination, my heart, my senses! Were my relations with persons of the other sex ever commanded by necessity, or at least by utility and conducted with becoming prudence? Have I not given way to dangerous curiosity in my conversations, my readings, or in some other circumstance? Have I spent well my time? A priest's time is so precious! Every minute is worth an eternity! What would not a reprobate given to obtain one minute of time? . . . . Study is for me of strict obligation; how did I fulfill this duty? Have I not exposed myself, through unnecessary absences, to let sick people die without the sacraments?

V. *My particular obligations.* As pastor, curate, champlain. . . . . These are too often forgotten. They require devotedness, order, constancy, so as to overcome the obstacles, the tediousness and distastes which tempt us to give up everything, or to do the work of God with negligence. "*Cursed be he who does the work deceitfully.*"—(Jer. xlviii: 10.)

PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

Kneel down before your crucifix, imagine that your last hour has come, that your good angel comes to tell you in the words of the prophet to Ezechias: "*Take order with thy house, for thou shalt die and not live.*"—(Js. xxxviii: 1.)

FIRST REFLECTION.—What is it to die? Death is a passage from this life to eternal happiness or misery. It is the end of time, and of all temporal things, the entrance into eternity.

I must die ; I must leave everything without exception. . . . relatives, friends, family. . . . To all things of earth I must bid an eternal farewell. I shall leave my house, my furniture, all that belongs to me. I shall leave everything. Are there any objects that are very dear to my heart? These I shall also have to leave behind. What a folly to set our affection on things which pass away so rapidly! How many pains do we not take which will end in naught but regret.

I shall die! That is, my body shall be separated from my soul, and from that moment its presence shall become irksome and painful to those very ones who loved me most. They shall go and lay it down in the cold ground, where it shall become food for the worms! . . . . Soon will my flesh be rotteness. How much wiser it would be, instead of flattering it, to employ all my strength in working for the glory of God and the salvation of my neighbor! Will I be thought of when I shall be in the grave? Ah, how soon are the dead forgotten! How insignificant is the esteem of creatures.

I shall die. That is, I shall enter the house of my eternity! Time, the world, all things temporal and worldly shall have disappeared like a phantom ; eternity alone shall remain. Oh, the terrible moment! To appear before the judgment seat of God, alone in His presence, to be questioned concerning my whole life by that Judge who knows all things, who is infinitely just, hates sin supremely, and who, on that day, shall be without mercy! To learn of Him which of the two shall be my lot, either the heaven of the good priest for eternity, or the hell of the bad priest for eternity.

Second Reflection.—When and how shall I die? How much longer have I to live? I know not. There is no regard for age. Shall I have time to prepare for death? I do not know. I only know that many persons, nay, some of those who were sick a long time, die at the moment they least expect. Shall I receive the sacraments, or shall I die without confession? I know not. I may suddenly lose the use of speech. Moreover, when one is sick what can he do? What folly to depend upon this last moment, when there is question of eternity!

Third Reflection.—Am I ready to die? What are my actual dispositions? Am I ready to leave everything? Am I ready to appear before the judgment of God, to render Him an account of all the blessings I have received of His goodness, of all the offices, of all the ministries

He confided to me? Is my conscience tranquil? Is there nothing that troubles me in my confessions . . . the accomplishment of the duties of my state? What folly to live in a state in which I would not like to die.

After considering for a long time these important questions, and taking the proper resolutions, recite the two following prayers whilst holding the crucifix in your hand :—

ACT OF RESIGNATION.

TO BE MADE BEFORE RETIRING TO REST ON THE DAY OF THE MONTHLY RETREAT.

Sovereign Master of life and death, who, in order to punish sin, hast decreed irrevocably that all men should die; behold me humbly prostrate before Thee, resigned to subject myself to that law of Thy justice. In the bitterness of my soul I detest all my crimes. A rebellious sinner, I have thousands of times deserved death. I accept it in atonement for so many transgressions; I accept it in obedience to Thy adorable will; I accept it in union with the death of my Savior. Let me die then, O my God, when, where, and in whatever manner it will please Thee. All the time which I will yet spend on earth through Thy mercy, I shall spend in detaching myself from this world which I shall soon leave, breaking asunder all the bonds which attach me to this land of exile, and preparing my soul for Thy dreadful judgment. I abandon myself unreservedly into the hands of Thy ever paternal providence. Let Thy will be done in all things and always. Amen.

PRAYER.

TO ASK THE GRACE OF A GOOD DEATH.

Prostrate before the throne of Thy majesty I come, O my God, to ask of Thee the last and most important of all graces, viz.: the grace of a happy death. Howsoever criminal may have been the use of the life Thou didst give me, give me the grace to end it well, and to die in Thy love.

May I die like the holy patriarchs, leaving without regret this valley of tears, to go and enjoy eternal rest in my true country.

May I die like blessed St. Joseph, in the arms of Jesus and Mary, whilst repeating those two names which I hope to bless eternally.

May I die as the most blessed virgin, inflamed with the most pure love, burning with the desire to be united to the sole object of my affections.

May I die as Jesus on the cross, in the most lively sentiments of hatred of sin, of love for my heavenly Father, and of resignation in the midst of sufferings.

Holy Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit; be merciful unto me.

Jesus who didst die for love of me, grant me grace to die for love of Thee.

Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for me, a sinner, now and at the hour of my death.

Angel of heaven, faithful guardian of my soul, great saints whom God has given me for protectors, forsake me not at the hour of my death.

St. Joseph, obtain for me the greatest, the most precious of all favors, the grace of dying the death of the just. Amen.

"*Moriatur anima mea morte Justorum!*"

COUNSELS AND PRACTICES.

CONCERNING THE PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

Arranging our temporal affairs. There are priests whose temporal affairs are in a deplorable state of confusion. This would be a source of extreme agitation and troubles in our last moments when calmness is so necessary. What shall be the consequence, if we be suddenly overtaken by death? Often-times considerable sums of money, given by pious people for the promotion of a good work, have passed to the heirs of the priest, because he had not taken the most ordinary precaution to guard against this misfortune. A priest should not wait a long time before making his will. St. Augustine recommends it to him in the following language: *Fac testamentum tuum, dum sanus es, dum tuus es; in infirmitate positus, blanditiis et minis duceris quo tu non vis.* He however, did not follow the counsel which he gave to the clergy, because he had nothing left at his death, of which he could dispose. Many other saints placed themselves in the same blessed impossibility.

Our bishops should, if not command, at least counsel all the members of the clergy to make their will, and to leave to their family nothing but their movable property and the real estate inherited from the family; the rest of their property should go after their death, to the poor, to the diocesan seminary, the propagation of the faith or pious works.

Assistance of a friend and of a wise director. If you have a true friend, a wise and holy director, you possess a treasure. Promise mutually to be true and faithful to one another, and that the first of the two who will hear that his friend is in any way dangerously sick, will immediately come and not quit him, if possible, until he has closed his eyes. Be not afraid to remove useless persons from your sick chamber, so as to give free access to him who has your confidence, and whom God wills to act toward you the part of a consoling angel. He will put an end to your doubts and troubles, will animate your courage. He will cause you to enter, or to persevere in the dispositions conformable to your state, and he especially will not flatter you, when it will be time to appraise you of the danger more or less imminent.

III. *Help which may be derived from some exterior signs of religion, crucifixes, holy water, etc.* St. Charles during his last sickness caused a painting of the agony and burial of our Lord Jesus Christ to be put at the foot of his bed. The good priest, when he is dying, wishes to have put before his eyes the image of Jesus Christ crucified; he retires, as it were, within the wounds of the Savior and unites himself to Him as a victim. In taking or receiving holy water, he thinks on Him who washed his soul in His blood, and who now also wishes to purify the victim about to be offered Him. It is especially from the holy virgin, from St. Joseph and your guardian angel that you may then expect particular assistance, especially if you have honored them during your life. See that their images may frequently meet your eyes when death will be near at hand. The sight of the scapular, of holy relics, of the blessed taper, a symbol of the charity requisite to go and meet the bridegroom, all objects of this kind may contribute to strengthen confidence.

IV. *Reception of the sacraments.* The sick priest being obliged to give good example in all things, should ask in time for the last sacraments, not waiting for the suggestion to receive them. How tranquil is the soul after a good confession! The one you are about to make as a preparation for death, ought to make up for the imperfection of all former ones. Have then so perfect a will to please God in making it, that after receiving absolution you may present yourself full of hope before Him who shall judge justices. Seek to discover your past faults by the light of eternity, wash them in the tears of sincere repentance, expiate them in the flames of Divine charity.

You are now prepared to receive the holy viaticum, prepare still more for it. This will be the blessed moment, if there is no obstacle in you to the merciful designs of Jesus Christ. To address if possible some words of edification to the by-standers, to make a short act of reparation to the Son of God present in the blessed sacrament, to ask pardon of those he might have offended, to renew the baptismal and clerical promises, would be practices most edifying to the faithful, and of great utility to the dying pastor.

Reanimate your faith in receiving Extreme Unction. "*The prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him.*"—(Jam. v : 15.) Death en-

tered into my soul, O my God, through the lack of mortification of my senses, let life come back to it through the merits of Thy blood. The sacred oil had consecrated me in my ordination, that I might offer the most august of all sacrifices; let it now dispose me to offer Thee the sacrifice of my life, let it change my weakness into strength, my fear into confidence, my depression into courage, and my fear of death into an ardent desire to die, that I may be so perfectly united to Thee as to be without fear to ever forfeit Thy love.

V. *Temptations to be overcome at the approach of death.* The implacable enemy of mankind and particularly of priests, who during their life placed so many obstacles to his cruel designs, keeps in store for them terrible temptations for the time of death. The attack is that of an angel upon a man, of a spirit immortal upon a man who is dying. The soul often loses a part of its vigor when the body is weakened. It is, therefore, most important to be well prepared against those last and terrible assaults.—Temptations against faith. Do not enter into a discussion with the enemy. When you are troubled with doubts, simply say, or merely express by a sign agreed upon between God and you, that you believe all that the Catholic Church believes and teaches.—Temptation of presumption. The better has a priest served the Church and his neighbor, the more he has suffered, the more he has edified others, the more also does the devil impel him to confide in his own justice. He is tempted to accept the praise that is bestowed on him, as a sure evidence of his pretended virtue. Let him humble himself profoundly, and say with holy Job: *Vere scio quod non justificetur homo compositus Deo: si vole uerit contendere cum eo, non poterit respondere ei unum pro mille.*—Temptation of despair. This is particularly to be apprehended by those who, like the priests, had great obligations to fulfill and receive more abundant graces, more extraordinary favors. The spirit of darkness reminds them of all these; he portrays their transgression in the most vivid, and sometimes the most exaggerated, colors. He strives to convince them that they cannot escape the anger of God, after abusing all of His blessings. Let you often preach confidence, meditate on the motives which should inspire it; treasure up in your memory passages of the Scriptures so replete with consolation on this subject, and you shall easily triumph at the hour of death over this terrible temptation: "*Illsolum diffidat qui tantum peccare potest quantum Deus bonus est. Peccavi peccatum grande, turbatur conscientia, sed non perturbabitur, quoniam vulnerum Domini recordabor.*—(Ser. b. in Cant.)

PRAYERS.

USUALLY RECITED AFTER MEDITATION.

I.

O Jesu, vivens in MARIA, veni, et vive in famulis tuis, in spiritu sanctitatis tuæ, in plenitudine virtutis tuæ, in perfectione viarum tuarum, in veritate virtutum tuarum, in communione mysteriorum tuorem : dominare omni adversæ potestati, in Spiritu tuo, ad gloriam Patris. Amen.

II.

Anima Christi, sanctifica me.
Corpus Christi, salva me.
Sanguis Christi, inebria me.
Aqua lateris Christi, lava me.
Passio Christi, conforta me.
O bone Jesu ! exaudi me :
Intra tua vulnera absconde me.
Ne permittas me separari a te.
Ab hoste maligno defende me.
In hora mortis meæ, voca me.
Et jube me venire ad te,
Ut cum sanctis tuis laudem te.
In sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

III.

Suscipe, Domine, universam meam libertatem. Accipe memoriam, intellectum, atque voluntatem omnem. Quidquid habeo, vel possideo, mihi largitus es : id tibi totum restituo, ac tuæ prorsus voluntati subjicio. Amorem tui solum cum gratia tua mihi dones, et dives sum satis, nec aliud quidquam ultra posco.

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